Search Engine Marketing in SMEs

The motivations behind using search engine marketing

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Abstract

Title: Search Engine Marketing in SMEs
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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to use Expectancy theory to describe and analyze small company owners’ motivations for their usage of Search Engine Marketing, in terms of their perceived Valence, Expectancy and Instrumentality.
Method: To research the aim of this study a qualitative research approach was used. The empirical data was compiled through ten semi-structured interviews from a varied selection of Swedish companies in the service sector. The data was analyzed with previous research to create an understanding of the motivations for using Search Engine Marketing.
Conclusions: The result of this study, when analyzed alongside Expectancy theory, indicates that small business owners are motivated to use Search Engine Marketing. Furthermore, which method of Search Engine Marketing that the owners are motivated to use is dependent on their perceptions of the different methods.
Future research: Due to the lack of research into the attitudinal and psychological aspects of Search Engine Marketing and the limitations of this study, it would be interesting if more research were done into this area. For example, it would be interesting to study if trust-based companies are motivated to use Search Engine Marketing, and if demographics affect the motivations.
Contribution: This study contributes with results on a previously unexplored area within the research field of Search Engine Marketing. The study also contribute with some information to practice regarding small service company owners’ thoughts about their usage of Search Engine Marketing.
Key words: Search Engine Marketing, SMEs, Expectancy theory, Motivation, Website visibility
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background & Problematization

The use of search engines has been a growing phenomenon since the start of the Internet. Google was started back in 1996 as a research paper on a search engine called BackRub (Google, 2015a). This led to the formation of Google Inc. in 1998 and has “grown to serve millions of people around the world” (Google, 2015b). Moody and Bates (2013) argue that “Within the Internet world, many new media techniques have emerged; however, few have grown in importance as quickly as search engines, which are now the leading knowledge portal for web users”. Already in 2003, Green (2003) states that since the start of search engines, its usage has grown to 80% of all website traffic. As the use of search engines grew, marketers started to use search engines for their marketing. This led to Sullivan (2001) coining the expression Search Engine Marketing, SEM, in 2001. Search engines are now some of the most visited sites on the Internet, and are the most common tool that new e-commerce companies use to market themselves (Jansen & Molina, 2006). Evans (2007, p. 21) argues that more than “half of all visitors to a web site now come from a search engine rather than from a direct link on another web page”. Furthermore, search engines handle more than 4.5 billion queries per month, which means that there are many competitors to compete with in order to attract customers to one’s web site (Evans, 2007).

Considering that most search engine users only look at the search results that come up on the first page, the competition for a high rank is very fierce (Evans, 2007). Thus, SEM can be used to attract those users to the company’s site (O’Connor, 2009). SEM mainly uses two techniques to get a better ranking in search engines and to attract more customers: search engine optimization (SEO) and paid placement (O’Connor, 2009). SEO is designing or modifying on-page and off-page elements of a website in order to get a higher natural ranking in search engines (Yalçın & Köse, 2010; Shih, Chen, & Chen, 2013; Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). Paid placement means that companies pay for advertisements with a link to their website in the search results (O’Connor, 2009). A lot of research focuses on either one of these strategies, or makes a comparison between the two in order to understand which one is more effective. However, many authors argue that both SEO and pay-per-click (PPC) are required for maximum website exposure (Murphy & Kielgast, 2008; Paraskevas, Katsogridakis, Law & Buhalis, 2011; Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013).

According to Skiera, Eckert, and Hinz (2010), research on Search Engine Marketing is still limited. Since the start of SEM, a lot of research has been done to help companies in the hotel and tourist industry make the most out of it (Pan, Litvin,, & O’Donnell, 2007; Murphy & Kielgast, 2008;
Beldona, Lin, & Chen, 2011; Paraskevas et al., 2011; Fesenmaier, Xiang, Pan, & Law, 2011; Pan, Xiang, Law, & Fesenmaier, 2011; Xiang & Pan, 2011). It is believed to be especially important in this business as most customers’ trips start at a search engine (Paraskevas et al., 2011). Research on SEM from the advertiser’s perspective is spread across different topics, but generally provides guidelines for companies on how to succeed with or make the best use of SEM. As will be evident from the literature review further ahead in this paper, succeeding with any SEM tool will depend on a number of factors. Many companies hire agencies to run their search engine marketing campaigns (Abou Naboud, Skiera, Stepanchuk, & Gerstmeier, 2012), outsource their SEO implementation to SEM companies, or simply use only payed-for tools because they do not have the skill to implement SEO themselves (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013).

In Sweden, the largest part of the economy consists of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Ekonomifakta, 2015). There are only a few research articles on SEM related specifically to SMEs, and how these can make the best use of it (Murphy & Kielgast, 2008; Quinton & Khan, 2009; Lahuerta Otero, Muños Gallego, & Pratt, 2014; Visser & Weideman, 2014). According to Quinton and Khan (2009), SEM is an affordable and flexible marketing tool, which is why it is especially relevant to use for SMEs that often have limited marketing budgets (Quinton & Khan, 2009). However, due to their limited marketing resources, SMEs might face particular issues with SEM (Murphy & Kielgast, 2008; Quinton & Khan, 2009; Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014). Murphy and Kielgast (2008) interviewed owners of small hotels and found that their limited exploitation of SEM was related to a lack of expertise, poor marketing planning, and their negative attitude towards using SEM and its effectiveness. Quinton and Khan (2009) found that the main issue of SME managers was limited funds for SEM. However, when conducting searches on Google for different services (in Sweden), we found that in some cases there are many small companies who have paid and/or organic links to their website. This means that some small companies might find it worth the efforts or financial resources to invest in SEM.

Most research on SEM has been done on keyword auction mechanisms, different SEM strategies’ effectiveness on things such as click-through and conversion rates, or models for measuring performance and metrics. However, very little research has been done on the attitudinal and psychological aspects of SEM. (Gauzente & Roy, 2012). To our best knowledge, there is no research on what motivates small company owners’ usage of SEM. One motivational theory that has largely been used in marketing is Expectancy theory (Gauzente & Roy, 2012). Expectancy theory was originally developed by Vroom, as a “framework to explain how an individual chooses between alternative forms of behavior” (Hann, Hui, Lee, & Png, 2007, p. 17). Since then, it has had several
different applications, one of which is to study the motivations behind the decisions that managers make (Pousa & Mathieu, 2010; Wood, Logar, & Riley Jr, 2015). Hence, we believe it is applicable to study motivations for small company owners’ usage of SEM. Expectancy theory explains motivation in terms of: Valence, Expectancy and Instrumentality (Smith, 2009). Valence is the preference for a resulting reward, whereas Expectancy is the perceived likelihood that the behavior will result in the intended outcome, and Instrumentality is the perception that the intended outcome will lead to the consequent reward (Smith, 2009).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to use Expectancy theory to describe and analyze small company owners’ motivations for their usage of SEM, in terms of their perceived Valence, Expectancy and Instrumentality.

1.3 Limitations

Due to time and resource limitations, this study will focus only on small Swedish companies, and companies that already use SEM as part of their marketing. Small companies that do not use SEM will be excluded. Furthermore, this study will only focus on service companies that sell their services in an offline setting.
2. Theory

2.1 Search Engine Marketing and the importance of visibility

The level of visibility on the Internet can be explained as the number of times users come across a reference to a company online (Smithson, Devece, & Lapedra, 2011). The Internet includes several hundred thousand webpages (Yalcin & Köse, 2010), and search engines enable users to find relevant webpages with the information they are looking for (Gandour & Regolini, 2011). In doing so, search engines also help companies find and attract new customers (Rangaswamy, Giles, & Seres, 2009). According to Yalcin and Köse (2010), in 2009, 81% of all Internet users entered webpages through search engines. From this it can be argued that the more times a company’s website is visible in the search results, the better the company’s online visibility. To obtain good visibility, companies need to understand their competitors and their target audiences’ search behavior (Smithson et al., 2011).

According to Green (2003), visibility on the web is crucial as both individuals and companies use the Internet to make research before making a buying decision. To ensure that Internet users find the company’s website, different Internet marketing techniques are used (Madleňák, Madleňáková, Švadlenka, & Salava, 2015). Research has shown that search engines are the main tool used by consumers to locate information (Abou Nabout & Skiera, 2012), and that most visitors to a website enter that site through a search engine rather than a direct link (Shih et al., 2013). Ho, Lu, Huang, and Ho (2010) argue that marketing through search engines is becoming increasingly more important as people rely on search engines for information. According to Olbrich and Schultz (2014), Internet marketing, and especially SEM, affects both online and offline sales. A successful search engine marketing strategy can generate steady levels of traffic to the website, a great return on investments, and enhance awareness of brands and vendors (Shih et al., 2013). Additionally, since advertising in search engines are displayed in response to the user’s search for information, it is considered by consumers as much less intrusive compared to other types of online advertising (Yang & Ghose, 2010). Companies can also use SEM to reach a more targeted audience at a relatively lower budget because the search engine results are generated by the user’s search query (Ghose & Yang, 2009).

As argued above, visibility of the website is the key to attracting consumers to the website. However, it is important to note that visibility is not enough to ensure that the consumer will pick the company.
The company will need to have a good website with a good design to actually attain the customer. The content on the website has to be “useful, usable, desirable, accessible, credible, and valuable” (Rangaswamy et al., 2009, p. 54). The user of the website must be able to easily perform the desired action on the website and easily find the needed information (Paraskevas et al., 2011). Visser and Weideman (2014) argue that the users’ ability to interact successfully with the website is equally important to achieving a high ranking in the search results. They also state that website usability statistics have shown that the probability that visitors will revisit a particular website is only 12% (Visser & Weideman, 2014).

2.2 Search Engine Marketing

SEM is an Internet marketing technique that increases the rankings of a website in search engines in an attempt to bring more visitors to the website (Ho et al., 2010). SEM can be divided into two main parts: SEO and PPC (Ho et al., 2010; Chen, Shih, Chen, & Chen, 2011; Quinton & Khan, 2009). Each will be defined and then discussed separately. In order to understand how SEM works and how companies can use it to reach more consumers, it is important to first understand how search engines work and the different types of search results that are displayed on the search engine results page (SERP). In appendix 1 the different search results can be seen, where the unsponsored links are the results of SEO and the sponsored links are the results of PPC advertising.

2.2.1 Search Engines

Search engines usually consist of (Paraskevas et al., 2011):
- A web crawler or spider that browses every searchable webpage. The spider also notes the webpage’s meta-elements or meta-tags, which are hidden information not visible on the webpage that helps the indexing process. However, some believe that search engine spiders mostly ignore meta-tags.
- An indexing program that while crawling the webpage creates an A-to-Z index of the words used on each webpage, including title and URL. This index is then stored in the search engine’s database.
- The retrieval program, which searches the index to find appropriate matches when users type a query. The program then ranks them in order of relevance and displays the results.
- The graphic interface or results page, which involves a list of websites that matches the words in the query. Each hit on the SERP includes a snippet of information that is usually derived from the meta-description tag or the first paragraph of the webpage’s content.
The lower left-hand part of the results page consists of organic unsponsored results that are ranked by relevance, which is determined by the search engine’s algorithms. These results are displayed free of charge for the advertiser. (Abou Nabout & Skiera, 2012). SEO is when the website’s content is optimized or designed with the goal to improve ranking among these organic listings (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). Above, below, and/or to the right side of the unsponsored results, the sponsored results are displayed. The sponsored listings are the result of PPC search engine marketing. The rankings of these result listings depend on each advertiser’s bid for the keyword(s) involved. The advertiser then pays a price-per-click according to this bid for each click on their advertisements. The search engine provider auctions out keywords, weights the submitted bids according to the advertisement’s quality, which is measured by a quality score, and then ranks the advertisements accordingly. (Abou Nabout & Skiera, 2012). Google also has a minimum required click-through rate (CTR), which is the number of times the advertisement receives a click, to be maintained for the advertisement to continue to be listed (Abou Nabout, Lilienthal, & Skiera, 2014). There is also a third kind of result listing, called paid inclusion, where companies can pay the search engine to get listed in the organic results (Pan et al., 2007). However, Google does not offer paid inclusion as it questions the integrity of the search results (Green, 2003). Since this study will only include SEM on Google’s search engine, paid inclusion will not be further discussed.

2.2.2 Pay-per-click search engine marketing

PPC, also called search engine advertising, is the most popular online advertising instrument with a 45% share of online advertising expenditures in Europe in 2012 (IAB, 2012; cited in Abou Nabout et al., 2014). According to Kritzinger and Weideman (2014), empirical evidence shows that about 82% of SEM spending has gone toward PPC campaigns. Sponsored result listings consist of short text advertisements with links to the advertiser’s website (Abou Nabout et al., 2014). As mentioned, the ranking and price-per-click of these advertisements are dependent on how much the advertiser bids on the keywords involved, as well as the quality score determined by the search engine’s algorithms (About Nabout & Skiera, 2012). In addition to displaying the advertisements in the search results, Google places advertisements on other search engines, next to Gmail messages, on content sites, and other smaller sites that allow Google to place relevant advertisements there in return for a share of the revenue. Being successful in paid search is therefore much broader than just appearing in the search engine’s result listings. (O’Connor, 2009). Furthermore, search engine advertising, as opposed to most other forms of advertising, enables companies to customize their advertisements for specific keywords and in that way reach customers that are already interested in buying their product/service (Abou Nabout et al., 2012). Evidently, PPC is a commonly used and potentially effective SEM strategy.
However, there are a number of factors involved in successfully implementing a PPC strategy. For example, some research deals with the appropriate bidding on keywords. According to Abou Nabout et al. (2014), higher search engine advertising expenditures are usually expected to increase advertising effectiveness, but their study shows that higher expenditures might not always lead to more clicks or a higher profit. Since ranking also depends on the ad’s quality score, Abou Nabout and Skiera (2012) suggest that advertisers should benefit from simply improving the quality of the advertisement. However, their study shows that this may not always be the case, as quality improvements led to higher weighted bids, which led to lower prices only if they did not improve the ranking of the advertisement. Therefore, better ranks likely lead to higher prices and SEM costs, with ambiguous consequences for profits (Abou Nabout & Skiera, 2012). The authors suggest that bids should be adjusted to a change in quality (Abou Nabout & Skiera, 2012). Furthermore, since an SEM campaign often contains hundreds or thousands of keywords, advertisers rarely manage these campaigns themselves but instead hire agencies to run the campaigns for them (Abou Nabout et al., 2012). According to Abou Nabout et al. (2012), commonly used compensation plans for these agencies either gives them an incentive to underspend or overspend on advertising.

Other studies focus on the selection of the right keywords and the number of keywords. The goal of search engine advertising is often to obtain as high a position as possible in the search results. However, having the highest ranked keywords is not necessarily the most profitable. A study by Ghose and Yang (2009) shows that the lower the keyword rank, and thereby the advertisement’s position in the search results, the lower the click-through rate and conversion rate. However, they also find that keywords that have more prominent positions on the search results page and therefore receive higher click-through and conversion rates do not necessarily lead to the highest profits (Ghose & Yang, 2009). Their study shows that profits are often higher for keywords that are ranked in the middle positions than in the very top (Ghose & Yang, 2009). Furthermore, something that is commonly believed and a popular claim by advertising agencies, is that the so called “long tail” of keywords, defined by Skiera et al. (2010) as the many less popular keywords entered by users to search the Internet, drives the success of SEM (Skiera et al., 2010). Furthermore, a study by Skiera et al. (2010) shows that the top 100 keywords generate the majority of searches, clicks, and conversions. However, they find that these keywords vary over time. According to Paraskevas et al. (2011), it is important to analyze which keywords are most popular among the company’s target audience before a campaign. There are also free keyword building tools available (Paraskevas et al., 2011).
2.2.3 Search Engine Optimization

As mentioned earlier, search engines use software programs called spiders or crawlers to browse websites, classify pages, and add it to their database so that it will appear in the SERP (O'Connor, 2009). Google’s algorithm generates organic search results based on indexing criteria such as relevance, page rank, and the presence of user-generated content (Yang & Ghose, 2010). This is where SEO becomes relevant, as it means designing or modifying the website to make it more optimized for search engines in order to improve the ranking among the organic search results (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013, Shih et al., 2013). It has been found that a search result is rarely clicked if it is presented after the first two pages (Fiorini & Lipsky, 2012), and that less than 10% of searchers click on links that appear after the third page (Shih et al., 2013). Furthermore, studies have shown that the higher the listing, the higher the amount of traffic to the website (Fiorini & Lipsky, 2012). Because of this, it is important for a webpage to be ranked high in the organic search results, which can be achieved through SEO.

SEO can be divided into internal and external website optimization (Yalçın & Köse, 2010). The internal website optimization includes content on the website such as “web site design, meta tags, keywords that are necessary for the web site, page names, pictures, links, content texts in each page and styles that are used for the related texts, site map, RSS feeds, pages in different languages” and much more (Yalçın & Köse, 2010, p. 489). External website optimization includes off-page elements such as “adding the web site to the site guide, using social media factors, using links from other optimized web sites to the related web page” etc. (Yalçın & Köse, 2010, p. 489). According to Shih et al. (2013), the implementation of SEO can be divided into five major categories: keyword, research and selection, getting the search engine to index the site, on-page optimization, and off-page optimization. Also considered in an SEO marketing strategy is how search engines work, users’ search behavior, the actual search terms typed into search engines, and which search engines that the target audience prefer (Shih et al., 2013). Kritzinger & Weideman (2013) describe SEO as consisting of the following steps: A list of keywords and/or phrases are developed, and their competitiveness and frequency are determined. Then, the website URL can be submitted manually to the search engines for it to be indexed as soon as possible. Finally, the on-page elements such as meta-tags, content, and site navigation are manipulated to attract search engine crawlers.

According to Colborn (2005, cited in Paraskevas et al., 2011), the use of keywords and key phrases are the most important elements for an effective SEO plan. The keywords’ position on the page, closeness to each other, and density are important factors contributing to the visibility of a website (Paraskevas et al., 2011). However, Quinton and Khan (2009) argue that link building is the most
effective tool to gain a high rank in the organic search results. The quantity and quality of these backlinks to a webpage, links to a website from other websites, is also given weight by the search engine’s algorithms. A high number of links, links from authoritative/reputable websites, and websites with similar content/keywords are valued higher by search engines (Paraskevas et al., 2011; Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014). To increase the number of backlinks to a website, one can use free backlink builder tools (Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014), or create and/or leverage activity on company pages on social media sites or a company blog (Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014; Shih et al., 2013). Other methods are submitting the website to online directories, or submit news releases to online news feeds (Quinton & Khan, 2009). Another factor to consider is that shopping comparison sites have become popular among consumers (Quinton & Khan, 2009). It is important for a company to be present on these sites and to make sure the information is adequate, valuable and up-to-date (Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014).

As mentioned earlier, website usability is argued to be equally important as attracting traffic to the website. Visser and Weideman (2014) find that there are some contradictions between applying SEO and website usability, based on content, keywords, and their presentation. On the one hand, to provide information to search engines requires enormous amounts of content and keywords/phrases. On the other hand, visitors prefer to not be overwhelmed by high amounts of content. Therefore, it is important to find a balance between reducing content and including enough relevant content to rank higher (Visser & Weideman, 2014; Paraskevas et al., 2011). Evidently, there are more factors involved in implementing an SEO strategy, compared to PPC. However, SEO can have much lower costs than PPC. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 The choice of SEM strategy

According to Kritzinger and Weideman (2013), empirical evidence shows that about 82% of SEM spending has gone toward PPC campaigns, 12% to SEO, and 6% to other SEM strategies. This, they argue, might be because business managers often know how to handle PPC campaigns on their own, as it is similar to traditional advertising, while SEO requires certain skills (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). From his analytical model, Sen (2005) concludes that no optimal SEM strategy includes SEO. This is surprising; since many SEM researchers conclude that both are needed for achieving the greatest effectiveness (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Murphy & Kielgast, 2008, Paraskevas et al., 2011). According to Paraskevas et al. (2011), a PPC strategy is appropriate when the website’s objective is just market awareness, but a balance between both organic and paid strategies should otherwise be used. However, there are advantages and disadvantages of both SEO and PPC.
The main advantage of SEO is that the organic listings occupy the main area of the result page (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). According to Pan et al. (2007), SEO is generally considered to be more effective than PPC as searchers pay more attention to the organic listings than the paid listings. This is because users tend to trust organic search results more than they trust paid listings (Shih et al., 2013). According to Kritzinger and Weideman (2013), research has shown that 60-86% of search engine users click on organic result listings, while only 14-40% click on the sponsored links. Similarly, Jansen, Sobel, and Zhang (2011) claim that the click-through rate on sponsored links is only about 15%, while Hotchkiss (2004; cited in Quinton & Khan, 2009) finds that more than 79% favor organic links. However, Jansen and Resnick (2006, cited in Jansen et al., 2011) find that introducing searchers to relevant sponsored results overcomes their negative bias and makes it positive. This is further strengthened by Paraskevas et al. (2011, p. 201) who state that “searchers appreciate sponsored links if they are relevant and are unconcerned if the search engines disclose them as sponsored links”. They further state that if the choice is between being at the top of the sponsored links or further down among the organic ones, one should aim for the first (Paraskevas et al. 2011). Moreover, a study by Yang and Ghose (2010) revealed that the conversion rate for paid listings was significantly higher, but most keyword-related characteristics had a stronger impact on the performance of organic search.

One advantage with PPC compared to SEO is that it can ensure that the website gets listed immediately and achieve high rankings. SEO cannot ensure this as it can take weeks or months for a search engine crawler or spider to index and review the website (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Sen, 2005; Shih et al., 2013). Additionally, high rankings as a result of SEO are not consistent (Sen, 2005). However, with the growing competition for popular keywords, PPC can be more expensive to implement than SEO, therefore not being suitable for companies with limited budgets (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Shih et al., 2013). On the other hand, with SEO companies need to continuously update their strategy, as search engine providers continuously change their ranking algorithms and keyword popularity among search engine users continually change (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Shih et al., 2013; Sen, 2005). According to Yalçın & Köse (2010), SEO is preferred over other online advertising as it has a lower cost. However, Sen (2005) states that trade experts claim that buying thousands of keywords for a paid placement campaign is cheaper than implementing SEO programs for even a few hundred keywords.

However, the benefits and results of SEO last longer than for PPC (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Quinton & Khan, 2009), although estimating traffic resulting from PPC is much easier since search
engine providers limit traffic to the site based on a predefined daily or monthly budget (Fiorini & Lipsky, 2012). Kritzinger and Weideman (2013) state that PPC offers more control over the investments as results can easily be viewed. However, as mentioned earlier, many researchers advise using both PPC and SEO. This is evident in a study by Kritzinger and Weideman (2013) which showed that both SEO and PPC are required for maximum website exposure. Furthermore, a study by Yang and Ghose (2010) shows that the probability of click-through on paid advertisements increases with the simultaneous presence of organic links and vice versa, and profits increased with 4.5% when both were present compared to either one of them. According to Neethling (2008, cited in Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013), companies can lose a great number of potential clients by ignoring either PPC or SEO in their marketing strategy.

The choice of using an SEO strategy, a PPC strategy, or both, will evidently depend on a number of factors. However, despite what strategy is used and whether a company manages the SEM themselves or outsource it to a web agency, authors argue that SEM should be implemented strategically and in accordance with the overall marketing plan (Paraskevas et al., 2011; Murphy & Kielgast, 2008). Paraskevas et al. (2011) conducted a focus group study with an expert panel of 11 SEM marketers and consultants from different countries. The study focused on the hotel industry but the authors believe the advice from the focus group can be applied to other settings. The results suggest that successful SEM requires several steps of analysis, planning, implementation, and control (Paraskevas et al., 2011). For example, the website must have a design that matches the purpose of it so that users can complete the desired action. Moreover, it is important to have good knowledge of how the search engine works and the target audience’s search behavior (Paraskevas et al., 2011). It is also important to monitor and evaluate the effects of the SEM campaign (Paraskevas et al., 2011). Similarly, Murphy and Kielgast (2008) argue that if the website is core to the marketing strategy, it must be managed properly by using search engine expertise, registration with search engines, measuring metrics, monitoring rankings, measuring profitability etc.

2.4 Search Engine Marketing and Small to Medium Enterprises

According to a literature review on small firms’ marketing by McCartan-Quinn and Carson (2003, p. 202), small firms typically “have limited financial, human, material and informational resources”. Marketing in the small firm will depend on the owner/manager’s attitudes, beliefs, skills, and expertise, and is often focused on achieving short-term objectives by intuitive “doing”, while long-term strategic planning is often neglected due to a lack of time and/or marketing expertise (McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003). Limited resources also affect marketing in the small firm, where some
consider the Internet to be an effective and affordable marketing tool for small companies, which enables them to compete with larger organizations on the same terms (McCartan-Quinn & Carson 2003). According to Visser and Weideman (2014), SMEs have recently adapted to e-marketing, where they often use websites to present and market their products and/or services. Furthermore, many traditional brick-and-mortar SMEs aim to integrate new web-based strategies for marketing in order to compete on the current fast-paced electronic markets (Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014). According to Quinton and Khan (2009), search engine marketing can be an affordable and flexible online marketing tool, which is of high relevance to SMEs with small or no budgets available for online marketing.

There are a number of challenges for SMEs regarding search engine marketing. Owing to a lack of expertise, many SMEs find it difficult to identify appropriate online tools that can achieve an acceptable return on investments (Hotchkiss, 2004; cited in Quinton & Khan, 2009). Since pay-per-click has become very popular to use, the bids and the cost-per-click on competitive keywords is high, resulting in large organizations often dominating the top positions in the search results. As mentioned, small companies often lack sufficient budgets for online marketing, and to be more visible online they have to use a set of simple and affordable techniques (Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014). Lahuerta Otero et al. (2014) conducted a study of 73 SME used-car dealerships to demonstrate the benefits and challenges of investing in online information intermediaries and backlinks. They suggest that small-to-medium brick-and-mortar companies, especially those selling high-involvement goods, should do the following to increase the attractiveness of their website and attracting consumers to their physical establishment: Use backlinks, advertise at information intermediary sites, deliver a well-designed website with valuable content, and leverage social media to improve popularity (Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014). Backlinks and information intermediaries were showed to significantly impact the website’s ability to attract consumers. Quinton and Khan (2009) tested two free methods to increase backlinks to the websites that were identified as most appropriate for SMEs with limited budgets: submitting the website to an online directory and submitting news releases to online news feeds. They found that both methods were effective at increasing website traffic, although using both simultaneously had a much higher and more long-term impact (Quinton & Khan, 2009). Sales and profits also increased significantly when using both. These two studies suggest that there are techniques that are free and that potentially can be used by SMEs with limited resources to increase website visibility.

Although there are cost-effective methods that small companies can use to increase their visibility in the search results, some studies show that SMEs lack motivation and resources to fully exploit SEM.
Through semi-structured interviews with three managers of different SMEs, Quinton and Khan (2009) found that all managers thought there was potentially a high cost involved for ineffective results when using SEM, and that it was a waste of time and effort. The managers all identified a low return on investments and high relative costs as the problem with PPC advertising, and stated that they were trying to improve their organic rankings (Quinton & Khan, 2009). However, limited funds for SEM were raised as the key issue in the interviews. Murphy and Kielgast (2008) interviewed 8 managers of SME hotels to investigate their use and exploitation of SEM. The interviews revealed that marketing managers rarely managed the company’s website themselves. Therefore, access to the website was not immediately available for updating content, which was something that was not done very often (Murphy & Kielgast, 2008). The use of SEM was very limited with only one respondent using both PPC and SEO at a strategic level. The other respondents said they did not have the resources, they had keywords and/or meta-tags but did not update them, or they believed they did not need to use SEM because of popularity of the destination, good local presence or affiliations that gave high rankings. Furthermore, they only measured the web site’s effectiveness via website metrics to a very limited extent, or never. Half of the respondents had no marketing plan and three had a plan only for the next three months, and marketing objectives focused mainly on short-term objectives. (Murphy & Kielgast, 2008).

SEM provides both opportunities and challenges for small companies with limited marketing resources and planning activities. However, when conducting searches on Google, in Sweden, in some cases there are many small companies having paid and/or organic links to their website. This implies that some are at least investing in paid placement, and some probably in SEO or other techniques. Thus, some small companies might find it worth the effort or financial resources to invest in SEM. This in turn suggests that the managers of these companies expect to achieve, or have experienced, desired benefits and results from this marketing tool. In other words, despite the challenges and limitations of small companies regarding SEM and marketing in general, some managers of small companies might be motivated to use SEM.

2.5 Search Engine Marketing and Expectancy Theory

According to Gauzente & Roy (2012) there has been a lot of research done on SEM, however, most of that research has been in three different fields. One of these fields focuses on modeling the market and auction mechanisms of SEM. Another field focuses on the effects that different SEM strategies have on things such as click through rates (CTR), advertising revenues, and conversion rates. The last field, which most of the research in SEM focus on, is designing models for different aspects of
performance and metrics in SEM, such as the performance that individual keywords have (Gauzente & Roy, 2012). This shows that most research done on SEM studies how SEM works and the effects that different aspects of it can have. However, there has not been much research into the attitudinal and psychological aspects of SEM (Gauzente & Roy, 2012). Furthermore, to our best knowledge, there is very limited research on SEM related specifically to small companies. This is where using Expectancy theory to study the motivations of small company owners for their usage of SEM comes in.

Expectancy theory is a relevant theory to use when discussing the usage of SEM, as it is appropriate to use when discussing “risk-taking, embracement of new behaviors, and specific goal setting” (Wood et al., 2015, p. 2359). Furthermore, Purvis, Zagencyzk, and McCray (2015) argue that Expectancy theory emphasizes that the external rewards (such as more visitors to a website), can lead to a change in behavior. This shows that Expectancy theory is a relevant theory to use when discussing the usage of SEM by small companies, as it can be argued that their choice to use SEM contains risk, new behaviors or actions that needs to be implemented, and goals that need to be set.

Furthermore, Expectancy theory describes motivations, which according to Pousa and Mathieu (2010) can influence behavior. If the behavior changes, the performance can be enhanced, which in turn can lead to the achievement of the specified goals (Pousa & Mathieu, 2010). For example, if the goal of a manager is to increase the number of visitors to the website, this can create motivation to put in the effort to enhance the website’s ranking and visibility in the search engine result listings. If the ranking then becomes higher, that can lead to more visitors to the website which means that the goal is reached. The manager might then be more motivated by the belief that higher rankings will lead to attaining the goal. This shows that Expectancy theory can be applied to describe the motivations of managers to use SEM.

Expectancy theory is one of the many different motivational theories that can be used to describe what motivations exist behind the decisions that people make (Smith, 2009). It has been used to describe motivations in marketing a great number of times before (Gauzente & Roy, 2012). Expectancy theory was originally developed by Vroom, as a “framework to explain how an individual chooses between alternative forms of behavior” (Hann et al., 2007, p. 17). From this it can be seen that Expectancy theory can be used to explain the motivations behind decisions that individuals, including managers, make when choosing between different alternatives. Since the original version of Expectancy theory, many different applications for it have been used in research. One of these applications has been to describe employees’ motivations in the workplace (Chang, Hsu & Wu, 2015).
Furthermore, Expectancy theory has been used to explain organizational behavior (Renko, Kroech & Bullough, 2012). There have been studies that apply Expectancy theory in order to study the motivations behind the use of new technology, such as information systems (Chang et al., 2015). From this it can be seen that most of the studies that have been made about Expectancy theory have focused on employees or organizations.

However, there have also been studies on the motivations behind the decisions of managers (Wood et al., 2015; Pousa & Mathieu, 2010). One of these studies applied Expectancy theory to managers’ motivations to begin exporting in SMEs (Wood et al., 2015). In that study it is argued that “Expectancy theory is particularly relevant when individuals or organizations are learning about new behaviors needed to achieve goals” (Wood et al., 2015, p. 2359). This shows that Expectancy theory is applicable to study managers’ decision-making and relevant to study the usage of SEM, as SEM is a relatively new form of marketing that may require some learning to achieve goals.

In most studies, Expectancy theory is divided into three parts: Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence (Purvis et al., 2015; Friedman, Cox & Maher, 2008; Chang et al., 2015; Renko et al., 2012). These three parts have then been adjusted to the research topic. The three parts, as defined by Smith (2009), can be applied to the motivations of managers to use SEM in the following way: Expectancy is the perceived likelihood that the behavior will result in the intended outcome (Smith, 2009). Regarding the usage of SEM, the intended outcome is some degree of visibility and/or a higher position in the search results. This suggests that if the manager has a positive attitude that using an SEM strategy will lead to better visibility and higher positions in the search results, they will be motivated to use it. Valence is the preference for a resulting reward (Smith, 2009), which is the desire to get the reward that follows the intended outcome. In the case of using SEM, it can for example be the desire to increase the number of customers, or to increase the visibility of the company online. Lastly, Instrumentality is the perceived likelihood that the intended outcome will lead to the consequent rewards (Smith, 2009). This means that if managers believe or experience that better visibility in the search results lead to accomplishing the desired goals for the company, they will be motivated to use it. From this it can be seen that the three separate parts of Expectancy theory can be used to describe and explain the motivations of owner/managers to use SEM. Furthermore, it is the sum of Expectancy, Instrumentality and Valence that together determine the motivation for doing something (Smith, 2009).
2.5.1 Expectancy
The Expectancy part is “the probability (belief) that one’s effort will result in the attainment of desired goals” (Renko et al., 2012, p. 669). Moreover, Expectancy is the belief that the outcome that the individual wants will occur (Tan, 2000). Wood et al. (2015) argue that management needs to have a positive attitude, as that will influence the outcome. Regarding the usage of SEM, this can be seen as if the manager does not have a positive attitude towards SEM and its outcome, they might not put in the effort that is required for a successful SEM campaign. Previous research that discusses Expectancy, has viewed it as “a momentary subjective belief of an individual that they will accomplish a given task successfully if they invest an appropriate effort” (Tan, 2000, p. 339). Furthermore, it has been argued that Expectancy “is based on the individual’s past experiences, communication, feedback, or information from other people” (Renko et al., 2012, p. 669). From this it can be seen that Expectancy is determined on the effort of a person, as well as the belief that the effort will lead to the desired outcome.

When applying this to the motivation for using SEM it is worth noting that Expectancy theory has not been applied to it before. Therefore, this study has used previous research to create a foundation of understanding, and then applied Expectancy theory to SEM as follows. The managers’ Expectancy will describe whether they perceive that the SEM strategy they use leads to higher performance regarding their website’s visibility and position in the search results; and if not, whether they would find it worth the effort to invest more in improving their SEM, or investing in another SEM strategy, to achieve better results. In this case, the effort is how much resource the manager is investing in the SEM, in terms of money, time and labor. Expectancy is the belief that these efforts will lead to the desired results, which is increased visibility in the search results. To be motivated to use SEM, the results must be worth the effort. Therefore, the results are in relation to how much resources the manager is investing in the SEM. Thus, Expectancy means that the managers perceive that the results of the SEM are worth the invested resources.

2.5.2 Instrumentality
The Instrumentality part can be expressed as the manager’s belief that the specific outcome will enhance organizational goals (Wood et al., 2015). Moreover, Instrumentality is the perceived probability that the outcome will lead to the desired goals (Tan, 2000). This can be related to the motivation for using SEM as the perception that the SEM contributes to meeting the company’s organizational goals. In previous research, it has been stated that Instrumentality at a certain level will lead to or hinder an outcome (Pousa & Mathieu, 2010). Furthermore, Renko et al. (2012, p. 669) explains that Instrumentality is the instrument of gaining the desired goals, for example “If I start my
own business, financial rewards will follow”. Applied to the motivation to use SEM, Instrumentality would explain managers’ motivation to be more visible in the search results. In other words, Instrumentality is their belief that being visible in the search results will lead to obtaining their desired goals.

As mentioned before, Instrumentality is the belief that the intended outcome will lead to the desired rewards. Instrumentality will describe the managers’ perceptions that being more visible in the search results contribute to attaining the desired goals. For example, if the goal is to increase the number of customers, do managers perceive that visibility in the search results contributes to attaining this goal? The level of perceived Instrumentality will depend on how important visibility in the search results is for attaining the desired goals.

2.5.3 Valence
Valence is the degree of “attractiveness of the rewards that follow achievement of the organizational outcome” (Purvis et al., 2015, p. 4). Moreover, Valence is the rewards that a manager wants to get based on their personal values (Wood et al., 2015). In SEM, that can be related to what the manager wants to accomplish with the SEM campaign. It can, for example, be to increase the number of customers or to increase the annual turnover. In previous research, Valence has been defined as “the personal perceived value that a person places on an outcome or reward that he/she would receive through his or her successful performance of a task” (Tan, 2000, p. 339-340). Moreover, Renko et al. (2012, p. 669) argue that the reward or outcome has to “be attractive in order for people to be motivated to attain it”. From this it can be seen that Valence is the value of the goal.

In other words, Valence is the preference for the reward that follows the intended outcome. Therefore, Valence will describe the goals and benefits that the managers wish to achieve with being visible in the search results, and how important they believe these are to accomplish.
3. Methodology

3.1 Approach and study design

The purpose of this study is to create a deeper understanding of small company owner/managers’ motivations for using SEM. SEM is a relatively new research field and the motivations for using SEM is an unexplored area. For this reason, and for the purpose of our study, a qualitative methodology was chosen. A qualitative approach is appropriate, as we want to get a deeper understanding of the expectations and motivations behind the owner/managers’ usage of SEM. For this purpose, we needed to investigate their usage of SEM, and the decisions regarding this usage, from the owner/managers’ own point of view. In order to gain a deeper understanding, we want to know how the owner/managers’ reason around their usage of SEM. That includes descriptions of their thoughts, feelings, and perceived benefits that affect their decisions. For the reasons mentioned above, a qualitative approach is appropriate to fulfill the purpose of this study (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Trost, 2010). For the same reasons, interviews with the owner/managers’ were chosen as the method to collect data.

Moreover, the study follows a deductive research process, which means that the questions that the study is based upon originate from previous research (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Considering that this study deals with people’s decisions, it is dependent on their own perceptions and biases. This makes the material in part subjective. For this reason, it is important to analyze the data collected with previous research, which is why a deductive research process is appropriate. A deductive perspective enables reasonable or appropriate interpretations (Sohlberg & Sohlberg, 2013).

3.2 Sample

We have interviewed micro to small service companies located in Sweden, who sell services in an offline setting and use SEM as a marketing tool. For the purpose of this paper, the definitions follow the European Commission’s definition of micro to small companies. It defines micro to small companies as companies with less than 50 employees and a maximal annual turnover of 10 million Euros (EUR-Lex, 2007). Research on SEM has mostly been done in e-commerce settings and on companies selling physical products, with the exception of the hotel and travel industry. In the hotel and travel industry, consumers often make extensive searches for information before making a purchase decision (Paraskevas et al., 2011). For intangible services such as hairdressing, skincare, gym memberships etc., consumers also need some way of assessing the quality of the service before
deciding to purchase. These are the reasons why we chose service companies that sell their services in an offline setting for our study.

Since the purpose of our study was to understand the motivations behind the usage of SEM, a purposive sample was used. A purposive sample was used to select respondents that are relevant and representative for the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2013). First, we needed to find companies that were actually using SEM in order to obtain the necessary information. Second, we needed to find companies that were relatively successful in their use of SEM, because we believe these are more likely to be motivated to use it, and in order to understand what benefits that motivate this use. Furthermore, we wanted to use companies with many competitors in their nearest surroundings, because we believe it is more likely that these companies have stronger incentives to be more visible in search engines compared to their competitors. To find companies that fit these criteria we conducted searches on Google for different services in larger cities in Sweden, for example “Skincare Stockholm”. We selected and contacted the ones that had either a paid advertisement, a good position in the organic search results, or both. The companies also fit the criteria of micro to small companies. In order to determine if they fit the criteria we used both their own websites and www.allabolag.se, which is a site that presents information about companies. In this way we found companies that we believed were appropriate for our study. We also want to note that we originally aimed at including companies of small (including micro) to medium size. However, all companies that were willing to participate in our study fit the definition of micro to small companies, according to the information on allabolag.se.

Companies were contacted by e-mail with a following telephone call a few days later. When we contacted the companies, we asked to come into contact with the person who had control over their marketing, e.g. the owner, in order to answer our questions. We originally aimed at achieving a balance between different types of services. However, we were restricted by the fact that few of the owners that we contacted were willing to participate in our study. Furthermore, for some types of services, there were not many small companies present in the search results page. Therefore, our final sample reflects services where it was common that small companies were present in the search results. As the sample was influenced by the willingness of respondents to participate, there is an imbalance in the mix of participating services. Our sample of 10 companies consists of the owner/managers or marketing managers of the following types of service companies: four Spa/skincare companies, three gyms, one hairdresser, one construction company and one law firm. The number of employees was between 0-10 and the companies are located throughout Sweden. However, during one of the interviews it became evident that one of the companies did not fit the criteria of micro to small
The company had in fact 80 employees, even though our research had shown that they did not have more than 50 employees. We chose to use the data from that interview as it provided insightful information. Furthermore, to see if there is a difference in how this company owner views SEM, we think that it can be interesting to compare the data collected from this interview with the data collected from the other interviews.

Regardless of the results, we are aware that the empirical data might not be generalizable due to the nature and size of the sample. However, we do not strive to reach statistical generalization and it is not our intention to generalize the results to other settings. Instead, the results from this study should be viewed as exploratory. Considering the theories discussed and that the methodology relies on academically proven methods, the theoretical implications discussed in this study might be generalizable to some extent. In order to provide more information about which settings the results apply to; the sample is described in the table below. The table will include facts about the size, location, type of service, and what position the respondent had in each company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Description of service</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spa / Skincare</td>
<td>Skincare treatments, offer manicures, Spa treatments &amp; massage</td>
<td>4 with owner &amp; 4 who rent space</td>
<td>The owner / manager</td>
<td>Nybro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Spa / Skincare</td>
<td>Skincare treatments, nails, make-up &amp; massage</td>
<td>5 with owner</td>
<td>The owner / manager</td>
<td>Central Uppsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>Hairdressing</td>
<td>2 part owners</td>
<td>One of the owners. Markets herself, not the salon</td>
<td>Central Stockholm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Construction Company</td>
<td>Construction jobs &amp; renovation, both B2B and B2C</td>
<td>3 with owner</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Gothenburg &amp; its wider region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spa / Skincare</td>
<td>Organic products &amp; skincare treatments, Spa treatments &amp; nails.</td>
<td>2 part owners</td>
<td>One of the owners / managers</td>
<td>Central Uppsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>Gym with personal trainers, physiotherapists, masseuse &amp; chiropractor. Instructed group training at schools and gymnasiuems</td>
<td>Around 80 employees</td>
<td>Marketing manager</td>
<td>Södermalm, Stockholm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 – Companies interviewed

3.3 Data collection

The method we have chosen for collecting data is to conduct interviews. The interview questions were created after reviewing relevant theories. Furthermore, the interviews that were conducted were structured as semi-structured interviews, which will be described in the following section.

3.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used so that we could control the interview whilst letting the interviewee get a lot of freedom to design their responses in their own words (Patel & Davidsson, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2013). In other words, by semi-structured interview, we mean that the questions were structured in an interview guide but they were unstructured in that they were open-end questions (Trost, 2007). Furthermore, as we were two persons that conducted the interviews, semi-structured interviews allowed us to follow the same interview guide whilst allowing us to ask follow-up questions when needed (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Moreover, the questions were designed in a neutral way, i.e. they did not influence the interviewee, which made it possible for them to provide their own explanations (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Trost, 2007). The interview guide can be found in Appendix 2.

Since the purpose of this study is to investigate the owner/managers’ motivations in terms of their Expectancy, Instrumentality and Valence, the interview guide was structured based on these three different parts. First, we wanted to assess how much effort SEM required from our respondents. To do this, we asked questions regarding what SEM methods the owners had chosen to use to be more visible in the search results, as well as how they perceived the resources needed for SEM. Asking which methods they used was also to be able to understand possible differences among the managers’
motivations for their usage of different methods. Secondly, to investigate their Expectancy, we asked questions regarding if they believed that the methods they were using led to higher performance, e.g. better visibility and rank in the SERP. Thirdly, to assess their Valence, questions were asked about what company goals and benefits they wanted to fulfill with the SEM. Lastly, to assess their Instrumentality, question were asked if they perceived that more visibility in the search results contributed to attaining these goals.

Furthermore, the table below will show how each questions in the interview guide relates to previous research. For example, question 1 in the interview guide was asked to get an idea about the effort and which methods they used to increase visibility in SERP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>What part of Expectancy theory</th>
<th>How it relates to theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>Which methods they use to increase visibility in SERP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>If they outsource or self-manage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>How they perceive the cost of SEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>How they perceive the time spent on SEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>Expectancy</td>
<td>How have the methods contributed to visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>Expectancy</td>
<td>If they are pleased with their visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>Expectancy</td>
<td>If they believe that more invested leads to more visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8</td>
<td>Expectancy</td>
<td>If they plan to invest more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 9</td>
<td>Expectancy</td>
<td>If the SEM has a good result considering the cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 10</td>
<td>Expectancy</td>
<td>If the SEM has a good result considering the time spent on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 11</td>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>Which goals they had with the SEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 12</td>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>How &amp; in what way the goals where important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 – Interview guide

3.3.2 Telephone interviews
The method of collecting data is to conduct telephone interviews. We have chosen to interview owners of companies located in different parts of Sweden, which is why we chose to conduct the interviews by telephone. Due to the time and financial restraints that we had, we did not have the possibility to travel to the different companies to conduct face-to-face interviews. We made the decision to conduct telephone interviews rather than face-to-face interviews, as we believe that we can achieve our objective in a better way by selecting companies that use SEM rather than companies that are within a close proximity.

We had a total number of 10 interviews, which were each approximately 30 minutes long. This became a total interview time of approximately 5 hours. The interviews were recorded, as we did not want to miss anything from the interviews. This as it is vital for the interviewer to be attentive to what the interviewee says by following up interesting comments and pointing out inconsistencies (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Trost, 2007). This can be hard to do if it is necessary to keep notes during the interview. Following the interview, the recordings were transcribed.

3.3.3 Transcribing
We transcribed the interviews at the earliest possible time after we had conducted them to be able to reflect the interviews in a credible manner. Furthermore, by recording and transcribing the interviews, it made it possible for us to go through the respondents’ answers more than once. This means that the analysis of the interviews will be more accurate than if they had not been recorded (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Both of us have gone through the transcriptions of the interviews to make sure that we both have a good understanding of the collected data. This also made the analysis of the interviews more credible.

3.4 Analytical method
As a lot of comprehensive data has been generated, one of the most difficult aspects of qualitative research is the analysis of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2013). It was important for us to not be distracted.
by the sheer amount of data; hence, we focused on the important information (Bryman & Bell, 2013). For this reason, it was important for us to have a structured analysis method that made it possible to identify themes in the data collected. To be able to do this we have chosen to use Expectancy theory to analyze the collected data.

This method was made evident in the interviews as the interview guide was categorized according to the main themes in Expectancy theory. This made the analysis easier as the data was already somewhat organized into the different parts of Expectancy theory: Valence, Instrumentality and Expectancy. First, the data was analyzed by summarizing and sorting relevant information and quotes from each interview into a table divided into the three parts of Expectancy theory. Then, we identified important and relevant information and quotes within each part from the table. This was sorted into new tables for each part of Expectancy theory. Finally, we identified common themes in each category of Expectancy theory. These will be discussed in the analysis section of this paper.

Furthermore, we both individually went through the data and divided it into the different aspects of Expectancy theory. In order for the analysis to be as credible as possible, we decided that both of us should make our own interpretation and summarize the data collected from the interviews, as that made it less likely that we misinterpreted any crucial aspect. We then compared and contrasted our different interpretations, in order to construct the empirical data. The empirical data was then discussed with the theories from the literature review, which in turn led to the conclusions of the study.

3.5 Quality criteria

The quality of this research will be discussed to make an assessment of whether the purpose of the study was investigated. The four concepts we considered when discussing the quality of this study were: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2013). These will now be discussed separately and applied to our study in order to determine the quality of it.

Credibility is achieved by using previous research to build a foundation (Bryman & Bell, 2013). To ensure credibility we have reviewed research on SEM and Expectancy theory, on which we based the interview guide. Since Expectancy theory is a commonly used theory in research to describe motivations, we used this theory to study our purpose. This will make the results more credible as the definitions of motivations that we used are based on previous research. In this way, the results of the study are not affected by our own interpretations of what defines motivation. In Table 2 is a summary...
of which types of questions were asked and how they relate to Expectancy Theory. Further, by analyzing the results with the theoretical data we aimed to increase the credibility. We also individually made our own interpretation of the data collected before discussing it with each other. This made the analysis more credible since we could compare and agree on the interpretations of different meanings. There were only a few minor differences in how we had interpreted the data, which were discussed and agreement was reached. We have also provided summaries of all the interviews so that the reader can make an assessment of how we have interpreted the data.

Furthermore, the transferability is how transferable the results of the study are to other contexts, cultures, and environments (Bryman & Bell, 2013). However, it is not our intention to generalize the results to other companies or settings. Rather, we strive to generalize our results to theory. In a qualitative study, it is important to look for the depth and not the width of the study. Since this is a qualitative study with a small sample, empirical generalization is not possible. Hence, the results are not transferable to other companies or settings. However, the theoretical conclusions can be further studied in more companies and other settings to decide if the results are transferable or not. Therefore, in order to make our results more transferable, we designed detailed explanations of the empirical data. This allows the reader to judge the data and decide if it is transferable (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Furthermore, in order to increase the understanding of which settings the results apply to; we have also provided descriptions of the sample companies’ size, service offerings, geographical location and the respondents’ position in the company. According to Malterud (2001), in qualitative research it is important to describe the situations in which the findings might be applicable so that the reader can assess the transferability.

Moreover, the dependability of our study is provided in the methodology section where the complete process of the study is presented in detail (Bryman & Bell, 2013). To strengthen the dependability of our study, we have thoroughly described the research process and why we have chosen the specific methods. We have provided full descriptions on how we chose the respondents and provided summaries of each interview. We have also recorded and fully transcribed each interview so that transcriptions are available. This allows others to examine the methods that were used, and judge the quality of the procedures that were chosen (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Lastly, confirmability is that the data in the study is transparent and can be authenticated by others (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Therefore, it was important for us not to let our own personal values affect the data collected or the results concluded. By being aware of our own subjectivity we have, to the best of our ability, tried to keep the study as objective as possible. Moreover, we have provided
summaries of the data collected from the interviews so that the reader can make their own interpretation of it and assess if the results can be strengthened. These summaries can be found in Appendix 3.

3.6 Criticism of Methodology

To increase the reliability of the research it is important for us to be critical toward the method that we used. That we chose to conduct the interviews via telephone rather than face-to-face can be seen as a negative aspect as it is easier to get a good interview if it is conducted in person (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Furthermore, the different companies in the sample could have been more evenly distributed among the different sectors. As it is now, there are more gyms and spa/skincare establishments than there are, for example, construction companies. Further, to more accurately represent micro and small companies, a larger variety of sectors could have been used and more interviews could have been conducted. However, as have previously been stated these decisions were made due to the time constraints.

Additionally, two of the interviewees were not the owner of the companies. This can be seen as a negative aspect regarding the sample, as our purpose was to analyze small company owners’ motivations for using SEM. However, as these two respondents were responsible for marketing and marketing decisions they had more insight into the subject area.

Another criticism regarding the sample is that one of the companies that were interviewed did not match the criteria of micro to small companies, as they had over 50 employees. We could have chosen to find and interview another company, but we chose to keep that company as it gave interesting answers. Hence, even though the information gathered from the interview was interesting and gave another perspective, it was not the purpose of the study to research larger companies.

Moreover, since we chose companies from the first listings on Google’s search results page, the sample also consists of companies that are relatively successful in their usage of SEM. This might mean that the owner/managers of these companies have a more positive attitude towards using SEM and are more motivated to use it. We are aware that the results and benefits that the owner/managers perceive to be a consequence of their SEM usage might be due to other factors as well, and that their possibly more positive attitude might affect these perceptions. That they have achieved high positions in the search results might for example be because competition might be low. This means that the methods they are using might not generate as positive results, and therefore not as positive attitudes
towards SEM, in other companies or in other situations. However, we wanted to choose companies that are successful in their usage of SEM, since we wanted to study the positive aspect of SEM for small companies and the perceived benefits and results that motivate their usage.

Moreover, as this is a qualitative study with a small amount of empirical data, the conclusions reached cannot be generalized. However, it was not the purpose of the study to reach generalizable conclusions as our study strived to create an understanding of the motivations for using SEM.

Furthermore, the fact that we based our interviews on previous research can be seen as a disadvantage, as this might have affected our interviews because of the knowledge we had before them. If we had not based our interviews on previous research, we might have found other factors that affected the motivations behind using SEM. However, we chose to do this as designing the questions from a theory enables to get appropriate and good answers and makes the results more credible.
4. Empirical data

In this part of the paper, the data that have been collected through interviews will be presented. The tables that have been used were made to make it easier for the reader to get an overview of the answers. Each table is described and summarized. This is done to make it easier for the reader to comprehend the data, but also to make the data easier to analyze in the next section.

Considering that the names of the companies are not of importance for the data, we have decided to call them company 1-10 or manager 1-10. In Appendix 3, a detailed summary of each interview can be found. The empirical data is structured based on the core aspects of Expectancy theory, as these are the aspects that will be analyzed in the next part of the paper. The empirical data is meant to create an understanding of the motivations and expectations that the different companies have of SEM. To be able to do this, Expectancy theory was used. Furthermore, based on the summaries of the empirical data, the three core aspects have been divided into new themes that can be found in the tables. We have chosen to present the themes that the interviewees have discussed, however, we are aware that some answers and perspectives are hard to separate from each other. Lastly, in order to see if there is a difference between the sectors, what the different business sectors thought of SEM will be presented.

4.1 Summary of the interviews

To begin the presentation of the collected data, a brief summary will be given in the form of a table. This table will give an overview of what the different owners/managers responded, structured based on the different aspects of Expectancy theory. After the table, a short description of its content will be provided. Then, the different parts of Expectancy theory will be presented separately, and a more detailed view of the answers from the interviews will be given.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Effort</th>
<th>Expectancy</th>
<th>Valence</th>
<th>Instrumentality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company 1</td>
<td>- Use SEO, paid ads &amp; external links - SEM is self-managed - Costs around 750SEK per month -Spends around 15 minutes a week on it</td>
<td>- Paid ads is preferred, as being on top is what matters, though SEO is also important - Happy with the results, considering the cost and time spent - Cheaper than other forms of marketing</td>
<td>- More customers - Increase sales of gift cards - Attract male customers - Increase awareness - The goals are very important to be able to expand</td>
<td>- The visibility has helped to obtain the goals with the SEM - It is extremely important to be on the top of the SERP, as it is Google you turn to for information. Has gained customers from Google.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 2</td>
<td>- Use Facebook, Instagram &amp; SEO to get higher ranking - Update content on the website regularly - SEM is self-managed - Cheap compared to other marketing - Do not spend much time on it</td>
<td>- Happy with the position, but could be better - Might begin with paid ads next year to increase visibility. - The effects of SEM is very good considering the time and cost of it</td>
<td>- Higher ranking on Google. - More customers - Increase awareness - More customers equals higher security, and makes it possible to expand</td>
<td>- The higher ranking on Google, the bigger probability that more customers will come - Feels that the visibility on SERP have led to obtaining the goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 3</td>
<td>- Primarily use paid ads - Use SEO and social media - Outsource the SEM - Cost around 1500SEK per month - It does not take any time</td>
<td>- Very happy with visibility from paid ads, do not think that SEO helps - Adjusts daily budget on Google depending on how busy she is - Do not plan to invest more, as things are now - The effects of SEM is very good considering the time and cost of it</td>
<td>- More customers - Tie contacts with others in the business - More customers equals higher security, and makes it possible to expand, however she has many regulars</td>
<td>- It is very important to be on top in the SERP, as customers increasingly turn to Google - Estimates that 60% of customers come from Google, so SEM have helped to obtain the goals -Paid ads more trustworthy than SEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 4</td>
<td>- Use social medias, blogs, external and internal links, SEO &amp; paid ads to increase visibility - SEM is self-managed - Cost around 10,000SEK per month - Spend 1-2 hours 2 days a week</td>
<td>- All the methods work together to increase visibility - The effects of SEM is good considering the time and cost of it - Cost is high but worth it to get customers - Want to increase time spent on it</td>
<td>- Increase visibility and annual turnover - More customers - Not dependent on attainment of goals. - The SEM is more of a test, to see what happens.</td>
<td>- Important to be on the first page, preferably as high as possible on that page, as people first turn to Google - Get more requests now than before using SEM -Want a way to measure effectiveness of SEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 5</td>
<td>- Use paid ads - Outsource the SEM - Cheap compared to other marketing - Not much time spent on it, check results &amp; make decisions</td>
<td>- Very happy with visibility from paid ads - More invested equals more visibility, but no plans to do it - The effects of SEM is very good considering the time and cost of it</td>
<td>- Increase visibility &amp; awareness - More customers - Very important to get more customers, as that is key to surviving</td>
<td>- Important to be as high as possible on the SERP, so that the customers can find them - Believes that the SEM has helped to bring more customers - Goals not reached but well on the way - SEM better than other marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company 6</td>
<td>- Use SEO &amp; paid ads - Both outsourced and self-managed SEM - Cost around 2000SEK a month, but</td>
<td>- Happy with visibility on Google - Happy with SEO not paid ads</td>
<td>- Increase the traffic to their website with 5% each month - More customers &amp; more sales</td>
<td>- Important to be visible on Google, as it is only the first five hits that you look at</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – Summary of interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company 7</th>
<th>Company 8</th>
<th>Company 9</th>
<th>Company 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Use SEO & paid ads  
- Outsource the SEO  
- Self-manage paid ads  
- Costs are low  
- Spend very little time on it | - Methods increase the visibility in the SERP, but could be better  
- SEO drives more traffic and paid ads is better for campaigns  
- More invested equals more visibility, but no plans to do it  
- Measurability is very important and helpful  
- The effects of SEM is very good considering the time and cost of it | - Use SEO & paid ads  
- Self-managed SEM  
- Costs are good  
- Spends a lot of time on it, works with it everyday | - Use SEO & paid ads  
- Outsource the SEM to family member  
- Costs around 2000SEK per month  
- Do not spend a lot of time on it |
| - Not very pleased with the result of the SEM, could have gotten a higher ranking  
- Do not want to invest more on it, as it is not a priority  
- Did not cost anything so it was worth a try | - More customers  
- The goals are extremely important as that is how they survive | - Use SEO & paid ads  
- Outsource & self-manage the SEM  
- Would like the cost of it to be a bit less  
- Do not spend much time on it | - Use SEO & paid ads  
- Outsource & self-manage the SEM  
- Would like the cost of it to be a bit less  
- Do not spend much time on it |
| - Will not continue with the outsourcing next year  
- The effects of SEM is good considering the time and cost of it | - More traffic to website  
- More clients  
- That the goals are obtained is very important, however SEM is probably not the right way | - Extremely happy with the result of the SEM  
- Important to use both SEO and paid ads, as they both fill a function  
- Wants higher ranking on the organic search result, as paid ads costs  
- Plans to invest more, if finances allow it  
- The effects of SEM is very good considering the time and cost of it | - The methods work good, they have a high ranking  
- Happy with their visibility  
- They get a lot of customers through Google, therefore the cost of it is worth it |
| - The goals are important, might get better effect if more focused on the local market | - More customers  
- Goals are very important | - More customers  
- Goals are very important | - Reach younger customers  
- More customer  
- The goals are extremely important as they need 400-500 customers per day |
| - Have not worked in the company for long, so hard to say if the SEM has helped with the goals, though from previous experiences he believes it will work | - It is extremely important to be visible to obtain the goals  
- The higher up on the SERP, the more traffic to the website, which leads to more customers  
- Increased visibility have helped toward obtaining the goals | - Very important to be visible to get more customers, as she does not get many drop-in customers, and she is not visible in any other way  
- The increased visibility have led to more customers, around 80-95% of new customers come from Google | - It is not very important to be visible on Google to obtain the goals |

As can be seen from the table above, most of the respondents (8 out of 10) use both SEO and paid advertisements. Of the two remaining respondents, one uses only SEO and the other one uses only paid advertisements. Furthermore, it can be seen that two of the respondents use social medias to enhance their visibility on Google. Another way to increase visibility was the use of external links,
which three companies worked with. Additionally, it can be seen that there is an even spread among those who outsource the SEM (3 companies), self-manage the SEM (4 companies) and those who both outsource and self-manage the SEM (3 companies). The companies that both outsource and self-manage the SEM, often manage the paid advertisements themselves whilst they outsource the SEO. Furthermore, it can be seen that all but one considers that the time spent on SEM is low. It can also be seen that 8 consider the cost of the SEM to be low, whilst 2 consider it to be high.

When it comes to the Expectancy part of the table, it can be seen that most respondents are happy with the visibility that they have on the SERP, as 8 out of 10 think they have good visibility and only two are not entirely pleased with it. It is worth noting that considering what they got from it, all of the respondents thought that the cost and time have been worth it. There is no consensus on what method is considered to work better, however there are some who argue that all the methods work together to increase the visibility. Additionally, most agree that if they would invest more, either time or money, the visibility would become better. However, there are only 2 companies that plan to invest more, though there were companies that would have liked to invest more if they could.

When looking at the data from the Valence part, it can be seen that the goal of attaining more customers is a goal that all of the companies had. Except from this goal, there were a variety of different goals such as reaching younger customers and male customers. Furthermore, it can be seen that most companies (9 out of 10) consider the goals very important. One company only works with SEM as a test, hence, the goals are not essential to them. Two of the companies want to obtain their goals to increase their security and to be able to expand.

Furthermore, for the Instrumentality part it can be seen that all but one of the companies believe that good visibility in the search results is important for obtaining the goals. This is believed to be because the customers more frequently turn to Google when looking for information. Moreover, all but one of the companies has seen that the SEM has helped in attaining the goals.

4.2 Expectancy

Expectancy is the belief that effort will lead to performance. The effort must therefore be in relation to the degree of performance that follows. Resources invested in SEM must be worth the visibility the company gets in the search results, i.e. the performance. Therefore, in order to be able to assess what the respondents Expectancy, the effort they put into the SEM first has to be established. The effort in this case, as has been established in the theory part of the paper, is the amount of resources,
in terms of money, time, and labor the company uses for SEM. In order to establish the amount of money and time the companies spent on SEM, we asked them how they perceived the cost and time that were required. To be able to assess the labor we asked them if they managed the SEM themselves or if it was outsourced to someone else.

Most of the companies (9 out of 10) considered the cost for the SEM to be low. The manager for company 8 said that he thinks the cost is great, not only because it provides good spread and it fulfills the function of what they want from their marketing, but because he can measure and see exactly what he gets from the investment. Several of the companies expressed that they felt the cost for SEM was considerably lower than for other marketing options. This has been interpreted that they considered the costs as low. However, one manager (company 4) said that it is expensive, especially considering that you can do a lot yourself for free. This shows that even though most of the companies consider the cost to be low, one think that it is expensive, when it comes to advertising costs or outsourcing the SEO to someone else.

Additionally, most companies (8 out of 10) also considers the time spent on it to be low. Several companies stated that they did not spend much time on it, as they only updated the information for a small amount of time every now and then. Manager 1 explained that she spent maximum 15 minutes a week on the SEM, which she considered little time. Contrastingly, manager 4 said that she tries to spend 1-2 hours, 2 days a week on it, and that if she had time she would have liked to work with the SEM every day to get better results. We interpret this as she thinks it requires a high amount of time, as she explains that she cannot spend more time on it, even if she would like to. Considering that manager 4 also considered the cost high, it can be seen that this company considers both the time and costs for their SEM as high. Furthermore, manager 8 stated that they work with the SEM every day, and that he spends quite a lot of time on it. From this it can be seen that as with money, most companies consider the time spent on it to be low. However, two of the companies consider that they spend a lot of time on it.

When it comes to the labor aspect of the effort, we decided to look at if the company outsources or self-manages the SEM. This because we made the assumption that if a company outsources and considers the cost low, that company has a lower effort than a company that self-manages and also has a low cost. Two of the companies outsourced the entire SEM, whilst four companies self-managed everything. The final four companies both self-managed and outsourced. Out of the companies that outsourced, three of them outsourced to people that they know, hence did not pay for that service.
Manager for company 9 outsourced to her husband who worked with it as a hobby, and following up on the results was something they did together because they think it is fun.

Following, a table to summarize the effort will be given. To be able to differentiate the companies and relate the information to Expectancy, the effort has been divided into three separate parts: the companies that only use paid advertisements, the ones that only use SEO and the ones that use both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PPC</th>
<th>SEO</th>
<th>PPC &amp; SEO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>h.c/ h.t</td>
<td>h.c/ h.t</td>
<td>h.c/ h.t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.c/ l.t</td>
<td>l.c/ l.t</td>
<td>l.c/ l.t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.c/ h.t</td>
<td>l.c/ h.t</td>
<td>l.c/ h.t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.c/ l.t</td>
<td>l.c/ l.t</td>
<td>l.c/ l.t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outsources 1 1 1
Self-manage 1 1 1 1
Outsources & self-manage 2 2

paid ads = PPC, h = high, l = low c = cost, t = time, ex: h,c = high cost

Table 4 – Effort

From this table it can be seen that the company that only uses SEO is self-managing and considers the time and cost to be low; whilst the company that only uses paid advertisements is outsourcing, though that company also considers the time and cost to be low. Furthermore, it can be seen that the companies that use both SEO and paid advertisements use a variety of outsourcing, self-managing, and both. However, it can be seen that there are fewer companies that use both SEO and paid advertisements that have outsourced everything. It can also be seen that there is an equal amount of companies that self-manage everything, and that both outsource and self-manage. Moreover, half of the companies that use both SEO and paid advertisements considers the time and cost to be low. The other companies vary how they consider their effort. One considers the time and cost to be high, two consider it to be high cost though low time, and the last company considers the cost to be low while the time spent on it to be high.

Now that the effort has been summarized, the Expectancy will be presented. Overall, all of the respondents perceived that most of the efforts they put into SEM led to the intended outcome of more
visibility in the search results. Furthermore, to reach an adequate level of visibility in the search results, it was in most cases perceived to require very little effort in terms of money, time, and labor spent on SEM. However, there were some differences between these perceptions among the respondents related to the use of PPC or SEO.

There were three managers interpreted as more motivated to use PPC. Manager 1 felt that it was beneficial to use both PPC and SEO, but that the paid advertisement was preferred as this guaranteed the top positions wanted at a low cost. Manager 3 did not put much effort into the SEO, as she wanted to be visible at the very top among the paid advertisements. Manager 5 only used paid advertisements and was not interested in SEO as the paid advertisements were cheap and gave enough results. Before company 5 started with the paid advertisements, they did not even show up in the search results. In the cases of these three respondents, the intended outcome for two of them was to be ranked in the very top positions. For the third one, the most important outcome was to be visible at all. Since PPC could achieve these intended outcomes, and did not require much effort, they had high Expectancy for using paid advertisements. SEO however was perceived as not contributing much to the intended outcome. Therefore, Expectancy for using SEO was low among these respondents. In other words, the efforts required for implementing SEO were not perceived to be necessary to achieve the intended outcome. However, as mentioned manager 1 thought that both PPC and SEO were beneficial to use together.

On the contrary, three managers were interpreted as more motivated to use SEO. Manager 2, who used only SEO, thought that paid advertisements could make the visibility better and would be worth the investment. However, she needed more time to plan the investment and evaluate alternatives. As for now, though, she felt that updating content on social media and the website required very little time and no costs at all, and were happy with the rankings of the website in the search results. However, a top position would be optimal. Manager 4 used both paid advertisements and SEO, and explained that being on the first page is very important, and being among the first 3 organic listings is optimal. Moreover, manager 4 thought that paid advertisements were expensive and, to lower the cost of advertisements, tried to put more effort into the free methods to increase the ranking. Furthermore, manager 6 also used both PPC and SEO, but thought that a much bigger budget than they could afford was needed for the paid advertisements to be effective. He had also noticed that SEO brought more traffic to the website than PPC, and thought that it was most important to at least be among the top 5 in the SERP. The common factor among these three managers was that they felt that they had obtained an adequate level of visibility with SEO, and that SEO did not require much
effort from them. Manager 2 had plans on investing in PPC, however it had to be worth the costs to gain a higher position.

Additionally, there were three managers who wanted to be visible through both a sponsored link and an unsponsored link. Manager 1 said that using both created synergy; that it became “a little all-in-one”. Manager 8 thought that SEO worked better for visibility in general, but that paid advertisements were better for campaigns to reach awareness. Finally, manager 9 said that she wanted the paid advertisements in order to reach new customers, while she wanted to have a free link to her website for people who knew about her and just wanted to find her. This was also because she wanted to reduce the clicks on the paid advertisement to lower unnecessary costs for clicks that did not produce a new customer. To reduce clicks on the paid advertisement was also important because when the daily budget was reached, the advertisement would not be visible anymore. This, she stated, could happen in the afternoon when most people start looking for these services.

Something that was a common opinion among the managers was that having a high rank in the search results must be worth the invested time and financial resources. In other words, the perceived importance of having a high rank depended on the level of effort it required from the managers. Manager 3 and manager 9 expressed that they thought that the great results they got, for a small amount of invested financial resources, depended on the type of business they were in. Manager 3, a self-employed hairdresser, said that it was evident from looking at the search results on Google that many of the hairdressers in town was not present with a link to their website. She believed that many people in the business did not have the skills to use SEM, and that she had an advantage because of this. She also thought that this would not last for very long, since the younger generation of hairdressers will be better at online marketing. Furthermore, manager 9, a self-employed skincare therapist, also said that she thought it was easy for her to get great visibility on Google because she had her husband who had the skills of handling it for free. She believed it was not very common in the business to use and be good at SEM.

As mentioned, in most cases being visible in the search results did not require much effort from the managers. When asked, most managers were motivated to invest more time and/or financial resources if needed to get a high ranking; but many stated that it had to be in relation to what they would achieve from it.

Furthermore, the Expectancy will be summarized in a table below (for the table to not have so much empty space, only the effort for the alternative that the companies consider is included):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outsource PPC: l.c/l.t</th>
<th>Lead to higher performance</th>
<th>Will not affect the performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-manage SEO: l.c/l.t</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsource PPC &amp; SEO: l.c/l.t</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-manage PPC &amp; SEO: h.c/h.t</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-manage PPC &amp; SEO: l.c/h.t</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsource &amp; Self-manage PPC &amp; SEO: h.c/l.t</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsource &amp; Self-manage PPC &amp; SEO: l.c/l.t</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paid ads = PPC, h = high, l = low c = cost, t = time, ex: h.c = high cost

Table 5 – Expectancy

From this table it can be seen that all but one of the companies think that the effort will lead to higher performance, which in this case is greater visibility on the search results. It can also be seen that the belief that the effort will lead to higher performance is not dependent on what type of effort the SEM is based on.

4.3 Valence

Valence is the preference for a resulting reward. What are the goals with being visible and having a high rank in the search results, and how important are those goals? These are the questions we wanted answered in this section of the interview. All of the companies stated that the goal or one of the goals, with their SEM is to get more customers. Three of the companies (company 7, 8 and 9) stated that their only goal with the SEM is to get more customers. Furthermore, they said that this goal is extremely important because if they do not get enough customers, they will not survive. Manager 7 stated that the goals were to get customers to visit their website, and that they would capture potential
customers through it. He also explained that these goals were extremely important. This is the way the other two companies also explained their goals.

Except gaining more customers, five of the companies wanted to create awareness about them. So that when people think about a certain type of service, they would think about them. Manager 2 said that she wants people to want to come to them as soon as they see the brand name. Furthermore, manager 5 explained that as they had recently started their business, it was essential for them to be recognized and to obtain more customers. From this it can be seen that even though many of the interview companies have creating awareness as a separate goal, awareness is a step on the way to attracting new customers.

Moreover, another common goal (4 out of 10) that the companies mentioned was to increase their sales, i.e. to increase their turnover. Manager 1 explained that they want people to think of them when it comes to gifts, therefore, one of the goals is an increase in the sales of gift cards. Additionally, manager 4 said that in the end it is about getting quotes from customers. Both manager 3 and 6 only stated that they wanted more sales. From this it can be seen that the companies wanted to increase their turnover in different ways: one wanted to sell more gift cars, one get more quotes (and later get the job), and the other two wanted to increase their sales.

Except these three goals of more customers, increased awareness and increased turnover, there were other types of goals. Company 10 wanted to obtain younger customers through the SEM, as those are the ones most easily reached through search results. Additionally, manager 3 explained that one of the goals was to increase her network of contacts in the business. This was an important goal as it opens up for new job opportunities. Lastly, to obtain more male customers was a goal for company 1. This is one of their goals as they currently have a lot of female customers, but they also want to reach men. These goals show that the goals of SEM varied between the respondents.

Furthermore, the companies also mentioned different reasons why the goals were important. For example, manager 10 said that if they did not want to obtain the goals, than it was unnecessary for us to be talking about them. In other words, to obtain the goals was essential. This idea was shared by managers 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Another reason why the goals were important to obtain was to be able to expand and to create a sense of security; manager 2 and 3 shared this opinion. Manager 1 said that if you want to develop as a company, you need more customers, i.e. the goals need to be obtained. However, company 4 explained that getting more customers through SEM was not essential to them, and they had used SEM mostly as a test to see if it worked.
Additionally, an overview of the answers can be found in the table below, where the rows represent the goals and the columns represent the reasons why they are important:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customers</th>
<th>Essential to survive</th>
<th>Able to expand</th>
<th>Increase security &amp; expanding</th>
<th>Not dependent on goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers &amp; awareness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers &amp; turnover</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers &amp; younger customers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers, turnover &amp; awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers, turnover, awareness &amp; network of contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers, turnover, awareness &amp; male customers</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6 – Valence*

As can be seen from the table above, there are many different reasons why the companies are using SEM. There are also different reasons why the goals are important or not. From the table it can also be seen that some of the companies have more than one goal. Moreover, the table shows that all the companies want to attract more customers, five want to increase brand awareness, and one wants to increase their turnover; whilst only one manager wants to attract male customers, one to attract younger customers, and one to increase the business contact network. The most commonly stated
reason for using SEM was to attract more customers, and the most commonly stated reason for that was to be able to survive. Six of the managers established this as one of the reasons for using it. Additionally, it can be seen that except for the survival/more customers, there is an even variety between the goal and why it is important.

4.4 Instrumentality

Instrumentality is the belief that the intended outcome will lead to the desired rewards. Do the companies perceive that being visible in the search results lead to attaining the goals? This is the main question that we wanted answered in this part of the interview.

Two of the respondents felt that both sponsored and unsponsored links were needed to attain goals (manager 8 & 9). For example, one respondent said that PPC was best used for campaigns to gain awareness, and SEO was more effective for visibility in general (manager 8). Another respondent stated that she used the paid advertisement mainly to reach new customers that were not aware of her, while she wanted unsponsored links for customers who only wanted to find the website (manager 9). Furthermore, manager 1 considered that SEO and paid advertisements filled a separate function. She argued that paid advertisements was important as that guaranteed her a place on top of the search results. However, she also considered the organic listings important, though her primary focus was the paid advertisements. Another respondent said that it is about the whole and not the parts; that both SEO and paid advertisements work together to make a whole (manager 4). Furthermore, manager 6 stated that it is essential to be visible on Google as everyone turn to it when they search for something. Thus, being visible on Google will lead to the desired outcome. This is something that company 10 agreed with, as he explained that being visible is everything, and something that a company has to be.

Contrary to this, some companies considered that SEO and paid advertisements had different effects on the desired outcome. For example, manager 3 said that even though she use both SEO and paid advertisements, she preferred the paid advertisements and did not think that the SEO contributed to getting more customers. She liked the paid advertisements as that made her have a top ranking, most of the time. Company 5 also considers paid advertisements to be enough. She explains that they only use paid advertisements, and that the visibility they have gained from that has helped to bring in more customers. She says that the goals have not been reached yet, but with the help from their paid advertisements she believes that they will get there. However, manager 2 only use SEO and believes that the visibility that she gains from that will lead to her obtaining the goals. They have customer
forms that they ask the customers to fill in, and one of the questions asked is how the customer found them. Most of the time it says Google. So they consider that visibility is very important to obtain the goals.

In contrast to the other respondents, manager 7 said that even though he was pleased with the visibility, which they had gotten from their SEM, he did not believe that it would help them obtain their goals. He explained that in his over 10 years worth of experience, he had only attained 3-4 customers through search engines.

A summary of the Instrumentality can be found in the following table, where the rows represent what the goals are and the columns if visibility will lead to the intended outcome:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customers</th>
<th>Visibility will lead to intended outcome</th>
<th>Visibility will not affect the goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers &amp; awareness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers &amp; turnover</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers &amp; younger customers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers, turnover &amp; awareness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers, turnover, awareness &amp; network of contacts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers, turnover, awareness &amp; male customers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7 – Instrumentality*

From this table it can be seen that all but one of the companies believe that the outcome, higher visibility and ranking on Google, will lead to the desired goals. Furthermore, it can also be seen that this belief is independent of what the goal of the SEM is.
4.5 Business sectors

In this part, we want to present the answers given from the interviews based on the different business sectors, whether or not they believe that the SEM is a good investment, and if it can help to obtain the goals. The different sectors were Spa/skincare (4 companies), gym (3 companies), hairdresser (1 company), construction (1 company), and law firm (1 company).

The four Spa/skincare companies (company 1, 2, 5 & 9) all agreed that SEM was worth the investment, and that it would help them reach their goals. All of these companies established that it is important to be visible on Google as most people turn to Google to search for treatments. If you are not in the search results, than the potential customer will go somewhere else. Furthermore, the same can be said about the gyms (company 6, 8 & 10). Both manager 8 and 10 stated similar opinions that if a company was not visible on Google than that company does not exist. Manager 6 explained that they might get a better result if they focused more on advertising outside on the local market. However, he also considered the SEM to be worth the resources and that it would help obtain the goals. The hairdresser (company 3) said that SEM is important as more and more customers turn to Google when they search for a hairdresser. It is therefore a very good investment and will help her obtain the goals. Moreover, company 4, which is a construction company, explained that even though their business relies a lot on trust, it is important to be visible on Google. This is because people nowadays do not only rely on recommendations they get, but want to check up the company themselves. Therefore, it is important for them to invest in SEM, and she believes that it will help them obtain their goals.

Contrary to the previous sectors, the law firm (company 7) explained that as their business is about trust it is hard to get customers through a search engine, because the customers trust recommendations more than a high ranking on Google. So for them SEM was not a good investment, as they do not think that being visible in the search result will lead to obtaining the goal.

The information is summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good investment</th>
<th>Not good investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spa / Skincare</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business sectors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law firm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8 – Business sectors*

From this table it can be seen that all but one of the sectors believe that SEM is a good investment, which can help them obtain the goals.
5. Analysis

5.1 Expectancy

As the Expectancy is determined on both the effort and the belief that the result will lead to the desired outcome (Renko et al., 2012), it is important to first discuss the effort that the companies put into their SEM. Overall, most of the respondents perceived that the effort they put into SEM led to the intended outcome, that is, more visibility in the search results. Furthermore, to reach an adequate level of visibility in the search results was in most cases perceived to require very little efforts, in terms of money or time spent on SEM. In the cases where it was perceived as more time consuming or expensive, it was often perceived to still be worth the effort. In other words, despite the level of effort that the companies put into their SEM, they all either considered it to be low or at least worth the results. However, there were some differences between these perceptions among the respondents related to the use of PPC, SEO, or both. In order to determine the Expectancy that the owners/managers have, what they thought about SEO and PPC first has to be established. Because how the companies work with SEO and PPC will affect their effort, which will affect their Expectancy (Renko et al., 2012; Smith, 2009).

One advantage with PPC compared to SEO, is that it can ensure that the website gets listed immediately and achieve high rankings (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). For manager 1 and manager 3, who preferred PPC to SEO, it was perceived as important to be ranked in the very top. Manager 1 thought that using both SEO and PPC was most beneficial, however PPC was preferred as it could guarantee top positions. Moreover, manager 3 put very little effort into SEO as she felt the paid advertisements gave her the top positions that she wanted. Manager 5, who only used PPC, said that before they started with PPC the company was not visible in the search results at all. PPC had however made the website reach top rankings immediately, and manager 5 was not planning on investing in SEO. Thus, according to these three managers, PPC is preferred over SEO, as it can guarantee a high ranking. Another advantage with PPC is that high rankings as a result of PPC are more consistent than rankings from SEO (Sen, 2005). This manager 1 agrees with as she said that PPC could guarantee that the website was always ranked at the top which SEO could not. Additionally, manager 10 had experienced inconsistent rankings from SEO, and used both methods to maintain good visibility. Manager 9 used both PPC and SEO since PPC could guarantee a high ranking, which SEO could not. From this it can be seen that when it was perceived as important that the outcome was to be ranked at the very top, a PPC strategy was used since it could guarantee this. For manager 5, the intended outcome was to increase the ranking of the website immediately, and a PPC strategy could ensure
this. Hence, these managers had high Expectancy for using PPC, as it could guarantee the intended outcome, which was to get high or more consistently high rankings.

Several SEM researchers argue that it is important to use both SEO and PPC when working with SEM for most effectiveness (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Murphy & Kielgast, 2008, Paraskevas et al., 2011; Ghose & Yang, 2010). There were some managers who thought that using both PPC and SEO was important, which corresponds to what most SEM researchers argue. For example, manager 8 said that using both in synergy was most effective. Likewise, manager 1 thought it was a little “all-in-one” to use both. Moreover, manager 9 thought that being visible in the organic results was important for reducing clicks on the paid advertisement and thereby the costs. Additionally, manager 10 used both SEO and PPC, thought that both worked well, and did not express a preference for either one of them. We interpret this as he was motivated to use both. Furthermore, managers 8, 9 and 10 had also experienced inconsistent rankings from SEO, which might be why they used PPC as well to boost performance. As mentioned, manager 1 said that using both was beneficial, but PPC could always guarantee high rankings. This shows that the managers were motivated to use both methods when it was perceived that both methods were needed to reach the outcome. Hence, they had Expectancy for both methods. On the other hand, manager 7 used both PPC and SEO and was not happy with the results from any of them. He was not motivated to invest further in any of them, as even if they generated good visibility in the search results that would not help to obtaining the goals. Hence, the major reason the he was not motivated to use any SEM tool was a lack of Instrumentality, which will be discussed further on.

However, the motivation to use a strategy was not only dependent on the perception that it led to the intended outcome, but also on the effort it required, in terms of financial resources, time, and skills. One possible advantage with PPC is that it might be easier to handle than SEO, as it is similar to traditional marketing (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). SEO on the other hand, might require more skills and more time to implement, as it requires continuous updating (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Shih et al., 2013; Sen, 2005). This was something that seemed to be the case for some of the respondents. Some of the companies that both outsourced and self-managed their SEM usually took care of the PPC themselves whilst they outsourced the SEO, as that was considered to be hard. For example, company 1 and 2 both had someone who created the website and initially made it optimized for search engines. Moreover, company 6 and 10 outsourced their SEO to another company, as they did not have anyone in the company who had the necessary skills to work with the SEO. Furthermore, many of the managers thought that PPC required very little time, although it is worth mentioning that some of the managers had someone handling it for them for free. This shows that the idea that PPC
is easier to handle than SEO, was also found in the empirical data. Therefore, the motivation to use PPC might also have depended on the perception that it was easier to handle, or that the managers did not have the skills to implement SEO.

The motivation also depended on the costs that the SEM required. Although SEO might be harder to implement, PPC can be more expensive to implement if the keywords are popular and competition is consequently high, which results in higher bids and a higher cost-per-click (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). Manager 2 used only SEO and thought that paid advertisements could make the visibility better. However, she needed more time to plan the investment and evaluate alternatives to know if it was worth it. As for now though, she thought that SEO gave good visibility in the search results, despite the fact that she put very little time into updating content on the website. The goal was having as high a ranking as possible, but it had to be in relation to the costs. Moreover, manager 4 used both PPC and SEO, thought that the paid advertisements were quite expensive, and tried to put more effort into the free methods to lower the cost, even though she thought that both worked well. The company had recently doubled their PPC budget mainly because SEO required much more time and skills than she currently had for it to be effective. Similarly, manager 6 also used both PPC and SEO, and thought that a much bigger budget than they could afford was needed for the PPC to be effective. He had also noticed that the organic links brought more traffic to the website. He did not believe the advertisements were effective and was going to stop using them and put more effort into the SEO instead. However, many of the owner/managers who used PPC believed that the costs for it were low. This could however be due to the type of business they were in and how many competitors that were using SEM. For example, manager 3 and manager 9 thought that it was not common in their business to use or have the skills to use SEM. They thought that they could achieve the top positions at such a low price because they had someone with the needed skills who handled it, while others in the business might not have these skills. Furthermore, manager 1 thought that because they did not have many competitors in their small town, they could pay a low price and still achieve high rankings. Manager 3 said that there were not many hairdressers present in the search results, which she thought was because not many hairdressers were using SEM. On the other hand, of the two managers who perceived that a higher budget was needed for PPC, one was in the construction business and sold their services throughout Gothenburg and its surroundings, and one was a gym selling their services throughout Stockholm. Consequently, they might have had more competitors and more popular keywords. Therefore, the cost-per-click for keywords might have been higher, and it might also have been more common in these businesses to use SEM. This shows that the price for PPC might have been so low for some companies because they did not have many competitors using paid search advertising. The two managers who thought that PPC was expensive both said that they wanted to
put more effort into the SEO instead. This was also because they believed that SEO could achieve the intended outcome if more time was invested. Therefore, they were more motivated to put more effort into SEO than PPC. The managers that did not pay a high price for PPC were motivated to use PPC, since it could give them great results for a very low cost. However, SEO required little time for some of the companies, although it evidently required more time than PPC. It was evident that most companies that handled SEO themselves were continuously experimenting with how to improve it and what to do. The companies that put more time into SEO or outsourced it to another company, were also the ones who planned and analyzed, continuously monitored and measured website traffic and behavior. Hence, they perhaps used SEO in a more strategic way. Additionally, except for updating keywords and information on the website, many companies were also successfully using free methods to increase backlinks. For example through social media pages and/or company blogs. These were some of the simple and affordable techniques suggested in the literature for small companies with limited marketing budgets (Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014). Furthermore, some of the managers felt that it was not worth it to outsource the SEO to another company as they had the time to do it themselves for free. Even though handling it themselves required more time and experimenting, they felt that the time invested was worth the results. From the different ways that SEO is used it can be seen that it is common to use both internal and external website optimization. Both these parts of SEO are important for an effective result (Yalçın & Köse, 2010; Shih et al., 2013). However, it has been argued that some part of SEO is more important than the others, for example keyword factors are more important than using backlinks, or vice versa (Paraskevas et al., 2011; Quinton & Khan, 2009). This idea was also found in the interviews as for example manager 4 said that using links was the most important part to gain visibility. Manager 2 on the other hand mostly focused on keywords by using an on-site blog in order to improve visibility from SEO. However, there were managers that thought that using every part of SEO was important, and they did not know if any method worked better. It is worth noting here as well that the fact that it in some cases was perceived as quite easy and not very time-consuming to reach performance through SEO, might have depended on low competition regarding usage of SEM. As mentioned, many managers were continuously experimenting with their SEO. This shows that, as with the literature, there was not a consensus on whether all parts of SEO are essential or if only some parts are enough. From the discussion above it can be seen that when the managers were considering which main SEM strategy to use, they considered the outcome as well as the costs and time required for any method. Therefore, their motivation to use any method was dependent on both the intended outcome and the amount of effort required to reach it.
That managers considered the outcome in relation to the effort was also evident as many managers were willing to invest more in their SEM if needed or in order to improve the results. However, they said that it depended on the costs, and that the costs had to be worth the results. Additionally, it was a common opinion among the managers that having a high rank in the search results must be worth the invested time and financial resources. In other words, the perceived importance of having a high rank depended on the level of effort it required from the managers. As mentioned, in most cases being visible in the search results did not require much effort from the managers. When asked, most managers were motivated to invest more time and/or financial resources if needed to get a high ranking, but many stated that the costs or time spent had to be in relation to what they would achieve from it. For example, some managers said that outsourcing the SEM to someone more professional would probably improve the results. However, they felt that they could achieve enough visibility handling it on their own, and that it was a question of how much financial resources it would require in relation to the results they would achieve. Some managers also said that they thought that increasing the budget for the paid advertisements would probably lead to even better visibility. However, they had to decide how high a ranking in the search results they want in relation to the costs. From this it can be seen that the intended outcome had to be considered in relation to the efforts required.

From the discussion above it can be seen that when the intended outcome was reached by using paid search marketing and the costs for it were low enough, managers were not motivated to put more or any effort into SEO. Hence, these managers were more motivated by Expectancy for using a PPC strategy. Contrary, when the managers had the time and skills to use SEO and it was perceived as achieving enough performance; spending money on PPC was perceived as not necessary or urgent. Hence, these managers were more motivated by Expectancy for using SEO. Furthermore, the costs for outsourcing the SEO were not perceived as worth it when managers felt they could handle it themselves. Finally, when it was perceived that both PPC and SEO were important for maximizing performance and the managers had the time, skills, and/or budget to invest in both, the managers were motivated by Expectancy for using both. To summarize, the Expectancy for the usage of PPC, SEO, or both, depended on what the intended outcome was and how much effort it required to reach that intended outcome. Furthermore, the Expectancy also reflects the managers’ attitudes. From the advantages and disadvantages that has been discussed regarding SEO and PPC it can be found that the answers from the interviews often corresponds to theory. However, that does not mean that there is an agreement on which is better, as with the theory there are many different opinions regarding this. As was stated above, it is important to analyze how the different companies thought about SEO and PPC as that is related to the Expectancy. As how the companies thought about SEO and PPC
affects the effort, which in turn affects the Expectancy (Renko et al., 2012; Smith, 2009). The idea that the manager needs to have a positive attitude in order to positively affect the outcome (Wood et al., 2015) was something that was found in the data from the interviews. As the managers that had a positive attitude towards the SEM were pleased with the outcome, and the manager who did not have a positive attitude were not pleased. However, this research does not conclude if the managers had a positive attitude because the outcome was desirable or if the positive attitude affected the outcome. Thus, it cannot be concluded whether or not the attitude affects the outcome or vice versa.

5.2 Valence and Instrumentality
Since Valence is the preference for a resulting reward or fulfillment of a goal and Instrumentality, in this case, is the perception that performance from SEM leads to attaining those goals, Valence and Instrumentality will be discussed together. This is because sometimes the goal was connected to the level of visibility the respondents wanted. For all companies, the main goal with the SEM was to get more customers, and all managers perceived it as very important to attain this goal. However, there were also other goals that the companies had. Some of the companies wanted to increase brand awareness, and others wanted to increase their annual turnover. Though it could be argued that both increasing brand awareness and annual turnover is related to obtaining new customers. Furthermore, there was one company that wanted to attract more male customers and another that wanted to attract younger customers with SEM. From this it can be seen that for some of the companies it was not only important to get more customers but they felt that SEM was appropriate for attracting a specific segment of customers. Since Valence is how attractive the goal is (Purvis et al., 2015; Tan, 2000), it was important to establish how important it was perceived to attain the goals. Every respondent said that the goals in themselves are important, though some argued that the SEM in itself was not important for the company to reach the goals. Furthermore, Renko et al. (2012) stated that a goal has to be attractive so that people are motivated to attain it. As all the companies that were interviewed considered the goal to be important they were motivated to attain their goals. Therefore, it can be seen that they are motivated to attain their goals when it comes to Valence. Though the reason why the goals were important varied between the companies. Some of the managers perceived that obtainment of the goal to get more customers were crucial in order to survive. Others had already established a good customer base, but believed it was important to always attract new customers in order to grow, or as a security, as customers are lost now and then. In other words, all companies thought that it was important to attain the goals they had with the SEM; hence, they were all motivated by Valence.
Instrumentality is the perceived probability that the outcome will lead to obtaining important goals or rewards (Smith, 2009; Wood et al., 2015; Tan, 2000). In the case of the usage of SEM that is the belief that visibility in the search results will help to obtain the goals. Therefore, in order to establish the managers’ Instrumentality, it is crucial to first establish what they thought about visibility in the search results. Research has shown that search engines are the main tool that consumers use to locate information before making a buying decision (About Nabout & Skiera, 2012; Ho et al., 2010) and that most visitors to a website enters that site through a search engine (Yalcin & Köse, 2010; Shih et al., 2013). All the managers except for one believed that it was important to be visible in Google’s search engine to get more customers because it is the main tool that people use to find information about the services they are offering. Two managers even went so far as to say that if you are not visible on Google you do not exist. It is worth noting that the manager who did not perceive that it was important to be visible on Google was a business lawyer. He believed that very few people search for that kind of service on the Internet. Instead, he said they rely on recommendations from someone in their contact network, and that finding a business lawyer requires too much trust to just pick a lawyer from searching on Google. However, this contradicts what manager 4 said, as she explained that they work in the construction business and the customers have to trust them in order for them to get hired. She also said that a lot of their customers come from recommendations, but that nowadays the recommendations are not enough, as people want to be able to search for information about the company themselves. Hence, these two managers disagree regarding if trust can be established through the website/being visible or not. However, these are very different types of services, which probably require different types of trust relationships. Furthermore, three managers said that even if being visible in the search results did not directly lead to an acquired customer, it could lead to awareness of the company. For example, manager 4 said that it could take months for a customer to decide from which company to buy construction services. Hence, being visible could increase the probability that the customer had them in mind when finally deciding. Moreover, manager 5 believed that SEM is a long-term investment, because when people Google and enters their website, there is another step to actually call and book an appointment, which might be done at a later point. From this it can be seen that being visible in the search results is important, even if it does not directly lead to an acquired customer. However, there are inconsistencies regarding companies based on trust, as one states that SEM does not work for them, whilst the other argue that it is important to be visible on Google. The above discussion shows that a majority of managers believed that it is important to be visible in the search results to get more customers because most people search on Google when they want to find their services. Hence, a perceived Instrumentality for using SEM was that it can reach more customers, since most customers find their services through searching on Google.
However, there were differences among the managers as to how high a ranking on the SERP that was needed to attain the goals. Research has shown that when a search result is presented after the first two pages it is rarely clicked (Fiorini & Lipsky, 2012) and that less than 10% of searchers click on links that appear after the third page (Shih et al., 2013). Studies have also shown that the higher the ranking, the higher the amount of traffic to the website (Fiorini & Lipsky, 2012). As mentioned, some managers thought that it was important to be listed at the very top of the SERP, because they wanted to be easily available for customers and the first name that they see. Two of the managers said that they believed that the higher the website is ranked on the SERP, the higher the probability that the customers click through to the website and ultimately chooses the company. However, there were managers who thought that being visible among the first organic listings on the first page was enough. Hence, there were some differences between the respondents regarding how high a ranking they perceived as important for attracting customers, though every company agreed that they had to be visible on the first page. There was however no consensus of where on the first page a company had to be ranked. This shows that as with the literature on visibility, it is important to be visible on the first page as potential customers rarely click to the other pages. Furthermore, it can be seen that some of the companies agreed with the literature that the higher the ranking the more traffic they get to their website, which ultimately leads to more customers. Our results show that all managers think it is important to have a high rank in the search results. However, the results also suggest that there are different perceptions among the managers regarding the Instrumentality of having a high ranking. For some managers, a top ranking was perceived as very important. For others, it was perceived as not necessary, as it was enough to be among the first organic listings and crucial to be on the first page.

There were also differences among the managers’ perceptions of the Instrumentality of being visible through a sponsored link or an unsponsored link. When it comes to visibility and trusting the search results, there has been some research into this. It has been found that one possible advantage with SEO compared to PPC is that searchers pay more attention to the organic listings (Pan et al., 2007) and trust organic listings more (Shih et al., 2013). Research has shown that 60-86% of search engine users click on organic result listings while only 14-40% click on the sponsored links (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). However, manager 3 believed that most searchers click on the sponsored links because they are at the top. She thought that people who do not know what a paid search advertisement is, will click on it simply because it is among the top results, while people who know what it is will probably get a positive image of her rather than negative. The latter was something that she had also heard from some of her customers. She said the she was sure that most customers found her through the paid ad and not from the organic results. Moreover, manager 5 had also seen a great increase in website traffic since they started using paid advertisements, however they did not use SEO.
so no comparison is possible. The experiences of these managers are not in line with the research theories that more customers click on organic listings. However, there has been some researchers that state that introducing searchers to relevant sponsored links can overcome their negative bias towards them and even make it positive (Jansen et al., 2011; Paraskevas et al., 2011). Though even here it is presupposed that sponsored links are associated with negative feelings, which is contradicting to what Manager 3 said. On the other hand, two managers who used both SEO and PPC, and measured website traffic with Google Analytics, had seen that SEO was better at driving traffic to the website in general. This is in agreement with the research that has been made on the subject. It is important to mention also that manager 3 put minimal effort and manager 5 put no effort into SEO and most likely did not have an organic listing to compare with. Additionally, visits to the website does not always result in a customer. However, our results show that two of the managers perceived that they could reach many potential customers through only a sponsored link, while two perceived that SEO was more effective at driving traffic to the website, which eventually leads to more customers.

There were also some managers who though that being visible through both a sponsored and an unsponsored link was important to attain the goals. Hence, they were motivated by Instrumentality for using both PPC and SEO. Several SEM researchers conclude that both SEO and PPC are needed for greatest effectiveness and maximum website exposure (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Murphy & Kielgast, 2008; Paraskevas et al., 2011; Yang & Ghose, 2010). A study by Yang and Ghose (2010) showed that profits increase when being visible with both organic and paid listings. There were some managers who thought that it was important to be visible through both sponsored and unsponsored links as they served different purposes. For example, manager 8 said that SEO is better for general visibility, while PPC can be used for campaigns to drive more relevant traffic to the website, as the advertisement text is customized to the current offer. Furthermore, manager 9 wanted the paid advertisements to get new customers who did not know about her while the unsponsored link was for previous customers or people who already knew about her and wanted to find the website. As many clicks on the paid advertisement did not lead to a new customer, she wanted an unsponsored link to her website as well to try to reduce unnecessary click costs on the paid advertisement. This shows that some of the respondents’ opinions were in line with many SEM researchers conclusions that both SEO and PPC should be used. However, as have been stated before, that notion was not held by all.

Additionally, it has been argued that website usability and attractiveness is equally important as having a high ranking in the search results to attain customers. Something that has been argued in research is that users must be able to interact successfully with the website (Visser & Weideman, 2014) and be able to easily find the needed information (Paraskevas et al., 2011). The content on the
website has to be “useful, usable, desirable, accessible, credible and valuable” (Rangaswamy et al., 2009, p. 54). Only two managers mentioned website content as an important factor. Manager 8 said that it was important to have good, relevant content and information on the website so that users stayed longer on the site. Furthermore, manager 4 said that customers need to establish trust before they decide to buy the kind of services they are offering. Therefore, she thought it is important to be visible on Google in a positive way, with good information and good reviews/ratings to give the company higher credibility. The purpose of this study did not include website usability and design, however this shows that it is important for companies to keep in mind that visibility of the website is not enough to ensure that a customer will pick the company. A part of the visibility on Google is of course also the website and not just the link with the company’s name and the included snippet of text.

From the above discussion about the perceived importance of top rankings, sponsored or unsponsored links, and the different reasons for using SEO, PPC, or both, it can be seen that there are different ideas about it among the respondents. Although most companies agree that it is important to have a high ranking. As Instrumentality is the perceived probability that the intended outcome/performance will lead to attaining goals (Smith, 2009; Wood et al., 2015; Tan, 2000), it was important to establish how the managers felt about visibility in search results. Most managers perceived that the probability that being visible in the search results would lead to attaining the desired goal was high. As mentioned, most managers’ goal with the SEM was to get more customers, and in many cases particularly new customers were emphasized as the goal with SEM. Some companies had already established a customer base, but wanted to attract new customers in order to grow and/or develop the company or as a security since some customers are lost. They thought that SEM was a great tool to reach customers who are not already aware of the company. For example, two managers said that advertising in the local newspaper is suitable for marketing offers to existing customers, while SEM is more suitable for attracting new customers. Some managers thought that a benefit with PPC is that one can adjust the daily budget according to how much visibility one needs. So at times when more customers aren’t needed, the budget can be adjusted to less and the advertisement will not be displayed as many times as before. Other companies were completely dependent on attracting new customers in order to survive. Some managers said that SEM was the best tool to get more customers as you reach a far greater audience than with traditional advertising or other forms of marketing, and at a lower cost. Another benefit that was also mentioned is that one can see the results from SEM more easily than other forms of marketing by measuring traffic to the website or the conversion rate from clicks. One manager also mentioned that one could reach a more targeted audience with SEM than with traditional advertising, as the people who search are already interested in buying the service.
Another manager similarly mentioned that being visible in the search results is important in order to attract customers that are interested in buying their services. This shows that most managers perceived the visibility as very important as that would help them to obtain their goals, and that there were many different reasons for this Instrumentality.

Furthermore, most of the managers had also experienced that they had gotten more customers since they began with the SEM. In many cases it was hard to measure or estimate how many customers were acquired directly as a result of the SEM, as the companies sold their services at a physical establishment. Only one company estimated the conversion rate of clicks on the paid ads but most managers had seen an increase of traffic to the website. Some managers had noticed or heard from many customers that they had found them through Google, and some even asked all their customers where they had found them and a majority said Google. It is likely that the experience of getting more customers through the SEM further strengthened the perceived importance of visibility in the search results, i.e. the perceived Instrumentality.

As have been stated above, Instrumentality is the perceived probability that the outcome will lead to attaining some desired goal. This perceived probability is further increased when goals are actually attained, which strengthens the perceived Instrumentality. All managers except one believed that visibility in the search results would lead to attaining the goals. They thought that it was important because they believed, and had experienced, that Google’s search engine is the main tool that customers use to find companies that offer their kind of service. Furthermore, most managers had also experienced that the goals were attained, which made them more motivated to continue with the SEM. However, one manager did not believe that visibility in the search results was important to attain more customers. This was because he believed and had experienced that people do not search on Google for the kind of services their company offered. Moreover, there were different perceptions regarding the level of visibility that was needed to attain the goals and which strategy was best to use to attain the goals. Hence, the motivation to use PPC, SEO, or both, depended on the perceived Instrumentality of each method. For example, if it was perceived that customers only look at the top results and therefore one needs to be visible at the top to get more customers, the perceived Instrumentality of using PPC was high. Additionally, the Instrumentality is the instrument that a company can use to obtain a certain goal, for example “If I start my own business, financial rewards will follow” (Renko et al., 2012, p. 669). Hence, when applied to this study the managers could think along the lines as, ‘if I use this SEM strategy, then more customers will follow’. This idea was found in the interviews as many of the managers explained that they thought that the SEM would lead to
more customers. Consequently, it can be seen that most of the managers were motivated by Instrumentality.

5.3 Business sectors

When it comes to the different business sectors that were included in this study it can be seen that there were some that were similar to each other. The four Spa/skincare companies are closely related to the hairdresser that was included, as all of these companies relates to the beauty industry. Furthermore, it could be argued that the three gyms also relates to this to some extent as some people go to the gym to look better. However, it is not possible to say that Spa/skincare and hairdressers fit fully into the same category as gyms, though there are similarities. This shows that out of the ten companies, eight of them were related to one another, to some extent. This is important to note when analyzing the data from the interviews, as the different business sectors might be motivated by different factors, as well as regard SEM differently. From the interviews it was found that all the different business sectors were motivated to get more customers.

However, when it comes to using SEM to obtain those goals the business sectors differ from each other. The Spas/Skincare, hairdresser, and gyms all considered that SEM was crucial to obtaining the goals. The construction company did not hold this idea, as they had started to use SEM mostly as a test to see if it worked. In other words, they were not dependent on the outcome of their SEM. Furthermore, the Law firm did not think that SEM would help them to obtain their goals. This shows that there is a difference to how the different business sectors regard their SEM. Both the construction company and the law firm argued that they got customers based on recommendations. Further, they both said that trust was an important part when the customers choose what company to hire. This suggest that the reason why these two companies differ from the others is because their relationship with their customers is based on trust, more than the other business sector.

Furthermore, it can be seen that when it comes to Expectancy and Valence the different business sectors responded in similar manners. This means that all the companies felt motivated when it came to Expectancy and Valence. However, the law firm company did not feel that SEM would lead to obtaining their desired outcome, i.e. did not feel motivated by Instrumentality. The law firm was also the only company that said that SEM would not help them obtain their goals. Smith (2009) argues that it is the sum of Expectancy, Valence and Instrumentality that together determine the motivation. Hence, it can be argued that the law firm lacked motivation for their usage of SEM as they lack
Instrumentality, whilst the other companies had motivation for their usage of SEM from all three parts of Expectancy theory.
6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to use Expectancy theory to describe and analyze small company owners’ motivations for their usage of SEM, in terms of their perceived Valence, Expectancy and Instrumentality. This section will summarize our findings.

When it came to the effort that the companies put into their SEM, it was found that most of the companies did not put much effort into it, in terms of money or time spent. Furthermore, for the managers that put more effort into their SEM, the effort was considered to be well spent. From this, the Expectancy could be further described and analyzed. It was established that the Expectancy to use PPC, SEO, or both, varied depending on the intended outcome and how much effort it required. The managers who perceived it to be important to reach a consistent top ranking preferred to use PPC as it could guarantee this, which SEO could not. Similarly, some managers were using PPC in combination with SEO to achieve more consistent rankings than if only SEO was used. Four managers perceived that both PPC and SEO were needed to achieve the visibility they wanted. Some also expressed that PPC and SEO serve different purposes. Furthermore, our results also indicate that PPC was perceived as easier to handle than SEO. However, the managers who perceived the costs for PPC as higher compared to the others thought that it was worth investing more time into SEO to reduce the costs of SEM. Our results also indicate that the costs for PPC depended on the type of business and the number of competitors competing for the same keywords. The same can be said for the effort required for SEO. To summarize, the Expectancy for using any strategy depended on both the intended outcome and the perceived effort required to reach that outcome.

When it comes to the Valence part of the motivation, the main goal of all companies was to attract more customers. Some also stated that they wanted awareness of the company or they wanted to increase sales. However, awareness of the company was important in order to attain more customers, and more customers were needed to increase sales. Therefore, the main goal with the usage of SEM was to attain more customers. The perceived importance, i.e. the Valence, of attaining more customers however differed some between the managers. For some managers it was crucial to attract more customers in order to survive. Others had already established a good customer base, but believed it was important to attract new customers to be able to grow, or as a security for the future since customers are lost now and then.

All managers but one perceived that the Instrumentality of being visible on Google is that it is the main tool that their potential customers use to locate information about the services they are offering. Hence, they can reach a larger audience through SEM than other marketing techniques. Some of our
respondents also stated that one benefit of PPC is that one can adjust the budget depending on the visibility one needs at the time to attract more customers. Additionally, some stated that SEM is particularly relevant for attracting new, unique customers that are not already aware of the company. Moreover, three managers stated that although being visible in the search results does not always directly lead to an acquired customer, it may create awareness of the company so that consumers have the company in mind when eventually deciding to purchase. Contrary to the others, the business lawyer neither believed or had experienced that potential clients would choose a business lawyer through searching on Google, as the service was too much dependent on trust. Therefore, he was not interested in investing further in SEM. Furthermore, we found that there were differences among the managers regarding the perception of how high a ranking that was needed to attain the goals. For some managers it was perceived as important to be visible at the very top among the paid ads, while for others it was perceived as enough to be visible somewhere among the first organic listings. All respondents however agreed that being visible on the first page is crucial. Two managers believed that it is important to be visible through both an organic and a paid listing, as they serve different purposes. Finally, all the managers except for the business lawyer had experienced that many or most of their customers had found them from searching on Google. Many had also experienced an increased number of customers since they started using SEM.

Furthermore, when the different business sectors were analyzed it was found that all the different parts of Expectancy theory motivated all of the different business sectors, except the law firm. The law firm did not think that visibility in the search result would help to obtain their goals; hence, they lacked Instrumentality. Considering that an individual has to be motivated by all the different parts of Expectancy theory, it was concluded that the law firm was not motivated in their usage of SEM, as they were not motivated by Instrumentality. Furthermore, as the other companies were motivated by all the different parts of Expectancy theory, they were highly motivated in their usage of SEM.

Having looked at previous research on SEM, we found that research has been done on different aspects and benefits of SEM. However, not much research has been done on the attitudinal and psychological aspects of using SEM. To research this, Expectancy theory was considered alongside SEM. Expectancy theory has previously been applied to different areas such as the motivations behind managerial decisions as well as employees’ work motivation but nothing directly related to SEM. By applying the aspects of Valence, Expectancy and Instrumentality to SEM one can begin to research the motivations behind companies’ usage of SEM as part of a marketing strategy. That is to say that the motivations for using SEM can further be understood by breaking down the information into a reward system where the attractiveness of the rewards of SEM is considered alongside the probability
of attainment of the rewards and results, and the belief that the specific outcome will enhance organizational goals.

6.1 Contribution to theory
The previous research on SEM discussed in this paper shows that there are many benefits of marketing through search engines. The previous research also shows that there might be many factors involved in successfully implementing an SEM strategy, which requires enough financial resources or skills. There have been a few studies on SEM in small to medium enterprises, which are based on the premises that many SMEs have limited funds for SEM, a lack of SEM expertise, and difficulties identifying more simple and affordable SEM techniques (Murphy & Kielgast, 2008; Quinton & Khan, 2009; Lahuerta Otero et al., 2014). Hence, previous research shows that although there are many benefits of using SEM, it might be difficult and require marketing resources and expertise that are often limited in smaller companies. This suggests that many small company owners/managers may lack motivation in their usage of SEM. However, our study includes small companies that have succeeded with their SEM and are motivated to use it. In this paper we have described and analyzed the motivations that the owner/managers of these companies have for their usage of SEM, in terms of their perceived Expectancy, Valence, and Instrumentality. As there are no previous studies on this topic, our study contributes to existing theory by providing findings in a previously unexplored area of SEM. More specifically, it contributes with findings on the Expectancy, Valence, and Instrumentality that motivate the owners/managers’ usage of SEM. In other words, our results show the Expectancy, Valence, and Instrumentality of using different SEM methods, as perceived by the owners/managers. However, because this is a qualitative and limited study, findings should be seen as exploratory, and more research is needed.

6.2 Contribution to practice
Our findings contribute to owner/managers of similar micro to small companies as the ones represented in our study. They contribute by providing information about benefits, results, and other factors that have motivated some small company owners’ usage of different SEM methods. This can be valuable to other owners who are considering investing in SEM. Most of our respondents had a positive attitude towards, and experience of, SEM as a marketing tool. A majority of our respondents were motivated by the fact that it required little effort to achieve good visibility, and that the return on investments was high. However, our findings suggest that the companies’ competition and target audience might have affected the results of SEM. Therefore, good rankings in the search results might not be reached as easily or at such a low budget in other situations with many close competitors using
SEM. Additionally, a company’s target audience may not find the company’s services through searches on Google. Hence, it may be worth considering the competition and target audience before investing in SEM. However, our respondents’ motivations for their usage of SEM show that it may be worth it for small companies to try SEM. Many of our respondents said that they were willing to invest more time or money if needed, since the value they got from it far exceeded the invested effort. It is not possible based on one limited study to establish what benefits and results that owners of similar companies can expect from using SEM, or if it is an effective form of marketing or not. However, our study contributes with insights into what some small company owners/managers think about different SEM methods and SEM as a marketing technique.
7. Further research

Considering that there are not many theories about the attitudinal and psychological aspects of SEM, there are many things that would be interesting to research further. It would be interesting to investigate how companies that sell services based on trust, such as law firms, plastic surgeons and construction companies, perceive SEM. As we have seen from the managers that we interviewed the results were inconclusive. Hence it would be interesting to see whether they think that SEM can help them to obtain their goals or not. Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate what the inconsistency regarding trust companies that this study found depends on, if the different opinions are dependent on age, education or other demographic factors. This leads to another area which would be interesting to investigate, and that is if demographic factors affect the motivation to use SEM. For example, are younger managers more motivated to use SEM than older ones?

Another area that would be interesting to investigate is the relationship between different motivational theories and SEM to further understand the motivations for using SEM. Considering the size of this study, more research into the relationship between Expectancy theory and SEM, would also be interesting. Especially, if different business sectors and the amount of competitors affect what managers think about SEM. Another aspect that would be interesting to investigate is if negative attitudes affect the outcome of SEM. This study shows that the one company that was not motivated to use SEM had a negative attitude towards it. Hence it would be interesting to find out if a negative attitude does affect the end result.
8. References


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**Personal Communication**
Company 1, Nybro (telephone, 2015-11-12).
Company 2, Uppsala (telephone, 2015-11-13).
Company 4, Askim (telephone, 2015-11-16)
Company 5, Uppsala (telephone, 2015-11-17).
Company 6, Stockholm (telephone, 2015-11-18).
Company 7, Växjö (telephone, 2015-11-18).
Company 8, Uppsala (telephone, 2015-11-18).
Company 9, Göteborg (telephone, 2015-11-19).
Company 10, Göteborg (telephone, 2015-11-19).
Appendix 1

(Nabout & Skiera, 2012, p. 142).
Appendix 2 – interview guide

Effort:
1. Vilka tekniker använder ni idag för att marknadsföra i sökresultaten på Google?
1.1 [Eventuella följdfrågor om det inte riktigt framkommer vad de gör]
2. Arbetar ni med det här själva eller har ni anställt någon som har hand om det åt företaget? (Om detta inte framkommit i föregående fråga)
3. Hur upplever du kostnaderna för sökmotormarknadsföringen? (dyr/billig)
4. Hur upplever du tid och arbete som läggs på sökmotormarknadsföringen av dig själv? (t.ex. till planering etc.)

Expectancy (Frågor om de tycker att investeringarna i sökmotormarknadsföring leder till högre prestationer):
5. Hur bra anser du att den metod/de metoder ni använder fungerar för att förbättra företagets positioner och synlighet i Googles sökresultat?
6. Är du helt nöjd med de positioner/den synlighet som företaget får i sökresultaten?
7. Om nej på 6: Tror du att om du investerade mer i att förbättra sökmotormarknadsföringen så skulle resultaten bli bättre?
8. Om ja på 7: Planerar du att göra det? (om nej, varför inte?)
9. Tycker du att sökmotormarknadsföring ger bra resultat i förhållande till vad det kostar för företaget?
10. Tycker du att sökmotormarknadsföring ger bra resultat i förhållande till hur mycket tid och arbete det kräver från dig?

Valence:
11. Vilka mål har du/ni med sökmotormarknadsföringen? Det vill säga vilka fördelar och resultat vill du uppnå för företaget? (T.ex. mer trafik till webbsidan, fler kunder, fler bokningar online, ökad synlighet av företaget etc.)
12. Hur viktigt är det för dig att uppnå de här målen?

Instrumentality (position i sökresultaten/besök till webbsidan, ex. fler kunder, mer synlighet):
13. Hur viktigt tycker du det är att synas i och ha en bra position i sökresultaten för att uppnå de här målen?
15. Upplever du att den ökade synligheten i sökresultaten har bidragit till att uppnå de mål som ni har med sökmotormarknadsföringen? (om de inte fått ökad synlighet så är föregående fråga irrelevant).
Appendix 3 – summaries of the interviews

Company 1, skincare company located in Nybro with 4 employees:

They use paid advertisements and SEO, and tries to get external inks through news sites. They have external links from the “Riksförbundet för hudterapeuter” and from different suppliers, which she believes will help them get a better ranking on Google.

When the website was first made, she had a company that designed it from a SEO perspective, and since then have self-managed it. Moreover, she feels that the costs are very good considering what you get. They pay 750SEK per month and spend around 15 minutes per week on it.

She believes that the paid advertisements work a lot better than SEO, as those guarantee that their company will be on top of the search result; because of this she is very happy with the visibility that they have obtained. However, it can always become better if a professional takes care of it.

Considering that there are not many competitors and that the city they operate in is a small city, the price of the Google advertisements is cheap. She also states that the Google advertisements are very affordable, especially if you compare it to newspaper advertisement, which is very expensive. Further, the Google advertisements reach more customers, and as she does not spend a lot of time on it she feels that it is very time efficient.

They are trying to develop the methods that they work with so that they can reach more customers, and gain more visibility. They would like to invest more money in it, as they believe that it would improve the result. However, at this time the finances do not allow this.

The main purpose with marketing on Google is to get more customers. Another goal is to create awareness, so that people think about them when buying presents to others, i.e. increase sales in gift cards. They want the awareness to make people think about them when they think about massage or other types of treatment that they offer. Another purpose of the increased visibility and traffic to their website is that it saves time, as the customers can both find information and book an appointment through their website.

The reason that it is important to get more customers is so that the company can grow and expand. Furthermore, more customers will lead to better service and make it possible for them to offer more treatments. They would like to offer other types of treatments than they do today. However, as things are now they do not have the capability to do so.

It is important to be visible in the search result, preferably on top, to be able to obtain the goals. This is important, as people are more likely to search on Google than to look at the advertisements in newspapers. Furthermore, people read less and less newspapers, and use Google instead. One of the reasons for this is because you always have a mobile phone with you. Even though the company is seen elsewhere, such as newspapers, the customers will still turn to Google to find their website. Moreover, another advantage using Google to advertise on is that you will automatically reach your target audience as they are already searching for related topics. Even though people might not click into the page when they come across it on Google, they might remember it in the future when they are looking for a treatment.

They are trying to establish themselves as more “exclusive” than their competitors, which mean that they have a higher price. This is another reason why it is important for them to be visible on Google.

They have seen a lot more customers to their website since they started using SEM. A lot of new customers also say that they found them through Google. However, they have not measured this in anyway.
**Company 2, skincare company located Uppsala in with 5 employees:**
When it comes to what they do on Google, they only use SEO. However, they have “a living blog” on their website that she tries to update every day, with information regarding products and treatments. She believes that this changes the text and keywords on their website. She tries to adapt their content to what people actually are searching for and the bigger brands that they use. This is to be able to get the highest ranking possible. Furthermore, they use Facebook and Instagram frequently to be able to increase their ranking in the search result. She is very happy with the effect Facebook has on the search results, as it is free and works very well.

The website was originally created by someone else, that also created the keywords (SEO), but nowadays they take care of that on their own. She does not update the keywords, as she feels that they reach a high ranking anyway. She updates the “living blog” instead to keep their ranking high on Google.

She thinks that the costs are low and very affordable considering what you get. Moreover, as they only update the information, they do not spend so much time on it and the time spent on it is worth it.

Furthermore, she thinks that the methods work very well in increasing their visibility in the search results. She believes that they have a high ranking, however, it could have been better. She believes that using paid advertisements might increase the visibility. There are plans to start with paid advertisements this spring depending on if she has time to plan it, and compare the different options there are.

Considers the costs to be low, and that it is a worth investments considering what you get. Moreover, she thinks that it is very time efficient, except the planning time that is needed before you can start using it.

The main goal is to get customers to choose them above others. More customers equal higher security, and make it possible to expand. Furthermore, it is also important with higher brand awareness, as she wants the customers to want to come to them when they see the name. Moreover, another goal is to get as many customers as possible to their website, as that results in more customers.

It is crucial to be on top of the search result, because if people search for a certain type of treatment and you are on top, there is a higher chance that they will choose you.

She has seen that the SEM has contributed toward the goal to obtain more customers. She tries to measure how new customers have found them by letting them fill in a questionnaire. This questionnaire has shown that a lot of the time it says Google, which in turn shows how important it is to be visible there.

**Company 3, self-employed hairdresser located in Stockholm:**
She uses both paid advertisements and SEO, and her boyfriend takes care of it for her. Moreover, she considers the costs low, maximum 1500SEK per month. She helps with the texts for the advertisements and to choose keywords. This is not time consuming, so she considers the time spent on it is very good.

She feels that the paid advertisements work very well, and that the SEO does not contribute to her visibility. She thinks that she is on top of the search results, most of the time.
That you are capable to change the cost depending on her availability is extremely good. So during for example Christmas, she can decrease the amount she spends on the advertisements, as she cannot take on any more customers during that time anyway. The same principle can be used when she has a lot of time over.

She does not plan to invest in any other methods, as she is very pleased with the result from the paid advertisements. Considering the costs of it, it is extremely affordable as you get more in return. If she did not have free help with it, she would have to spend a lot of time on it but thinks that it would be worth it to learn how to do it. However, if the price on the Google advertisements goes up she might have to reconsider using them.

The main goal is to get more customers, especially as she has recently opened a new shop. So more customers mean that she could hire employees and expand. New customers also create a security for the future. Another goal is to build a network of contacts, as that can give her possibilities in the future.

It is important to be visible in the search result so that customers find her easily and fast. She wants her to be the first one they find. Nowadays most people find a hairdresser on Google, or by recommendations from a friend.

She believes that it is an advantage that she markets herself instead of a shop, as that makes it possible for people to know what they get when go to her. She has not seen any other hairdresser do this. Before, when she worked at a shop people would call there and ask for her. She is positive that this is because of her marketing on Google and believes that this will become a more popular technique for new hairdressers.

She believes that around 60% of her customers comes from the Google advertisements. Furthermore, she thinks that especially young customers search for information from Google. This is another reason why it is important to market yourself and not a shop, as the customers read specifically about her.

She argues that a paid advertisement is preferred over SEO, as people who do not know that it is an advertisement will think that it is positive that she is on top. She also thinks that an advertisement can create a positive connotation for those who know that it is an advertisement, as she can be seen as hard working and in control. This is something she has heard from her customers.

**Company 4, construction company located in Gothenburg with 3 employees:**
They work a lot with both external and internal links by using social medias such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, as well as blogs to created external links to their webpage. Furthermore, they use keywords on their webpage to get a higher ranking (SEO), and they also use paid advertisements, through Google Adwords.

They take cares of everything on their own, and spend around 1-2 hours 2 days a week on it. Considers the cost to be expensive, though worth it. Would consider hiring someone to take care of it for them very expensive as they can do it on their own. Moreover, if you want a good (popular) keyword than the PPC cost will be high. They have had a budget of 5000SEK per month but have had to increase it to 10.000SEK. Even though the costs are high the rewards are worth it, as the revenues they get from one customer far out weights the costs. In other words, they are very pleased with the ranking based on the money and time spent on it. However, they would have been even happier with the SEM if they could have been more visible with SEO, as that does not cost anything.

The methods work well, though you have to spend money and time to be visible. They are working to decrease the costs and still increase the visibility by using more free methods. If they would have
had more time to update the website with texts and keywords, as well as the blog, she would have liked to work on it every day. Furthermore, they believe that it is important to combine social medias, internal links and external links to get the best effect. In other words, it is the whole SEM that matters not the individual methods.

The goals are to increase visibility in order to increase turnover and get more customers. In the end it is about getting more quotes. Hence, it is important to be in the top 3 in the organic search result, at the very least on the first page. As nobody check the second page.

They are a small company in a vulnerable branch, where it is hard to get the customers to trust them. Which is why it is important to be visible on Google, and to have good information, and to be visible in a positive way, because that increases the credibility of the company. Moreover, in this branch many trust recommendations from others when deciding what company to hire, though you cannot always trust the recommendations, hence it is important to be visible online. Their customers do not decide what company to use over a day, but it can take up to several months. This is another reason why it is important to be visible on many different places so that the customers keep their company in mind when making the decision. When you buy something or search for information you turn to Google, hence it is important to be visible there.

They have noticed an increase in quotes since they started with Google. However, they think that it is hard to measure the effect of the advertisements, as it is hard to know which clicks on an advertisement lead to a new customer. Though it is easier to see the results with Google Adwords than traditional marketing.

**Company 5, Spa located Uppsala in with 2 owners and no employees:**

They only use paid advertisements, which they outsource to a guy that helps them with it. They feel that the costs are very good, and much cheaper than advertisements in newspapers, which is very good. Furthermore, they do not spend much time on it at all, just to make decisions regarding it, and the results from the updates goes very quick to check.

They feel that the paid advertisements work very well with increasing their ranking in the search result. Moreover, they are pleased with the results that they have achieved. However, they would have a better ranking if they paid more for it, though considering what they have invested in it, it works well, so they do not plan to invest more. Before they started with the paid advertisements they were not in the search results, so they see a clear improvement from they started using it.

The Google advertisements work better than advertisements in newspapers. They are both cheaper and less time-consuming than advertisements in newspapers. Furthermore, with Google advertisements you can decide the cost of it on your own. They are planning to continue using the Google advertisements as they see it as a long-term investment.

The goal is to be more visible, if people Google for a certain type of treatment they want to be as high up in the search result as possible. Another goal is to get more customers, which is extremely important as they are a new company and had to start from scratch. Furthermore, as they are an ecologic spa they want people to know that, as a lot of people today are interested in ecologic products.

To be on top of the search result is very important to get new customers. Google is the tool of choice for a lot of people today when they are searching for information about a service.
The increase in visibility (ranking in the search result) has not made them obtain their goals, but they see a trend towards the right direction. They have heard from many customers that they have found them from Google. Moreover, they get more phone calls about treatments.

As the advertisements on Google are seen as a long-term investment, they wish to increase awareness about the company and what they offer. If they create awareness of the company and their offerings, then it is just a step between the customers clicking in to their website and actually call to book a treatment.

They can see that a lot of people have been in on their website, though have not made a booking. This is a really fun feature, to be able to see how many have clicked in to their website.

**Company 6, gym located in Stockholm with 80 employees:**
They use both SEO and paid advertisements. They have outsourced some of the work to another company, though they do take care of some on their own. They spend some time on the SEO on their own, and use Google Analytics. They do not consider the cost of the work to be high, though the costs of the Google advertisements are high. At the moment they spend around 2000SEK per month on it, though they believe that you would have to spend around 50,000SEK for it to really give an effect. They control the time they spend on it themselves, which is good, and they most just have keep track of activity on the website and act if it decreases.

They have not noticed that the paid advertisements have had a big impact on the traffic to their website, so they feel that SEO works better. They get a good position if people search locally in Södermalm. They will not continue to invest money in the paid advertisements next year, as that does not work as well as they would have liked. The SEO give enough traffic to their website and visibility, though they would like to develop the use of SEO.

They are pleased with the visibility that they have in the search results, even though they are not pleased with the company they have hired to develop it for them. They feel that there is no reason to continue to invest more into it, as they already have a good ranking on Google. They prefer to invest more on Facebook advertisements and banners for aftenbladet.se.

The goal is to increase the traffic to their website with 5% each month. This to get more customers and more sales. It is important to reach the goal with more customers and sales. The goal to increase traffic with 5% is only important if that in turn leads to more customers and sales. So, if they do not see an increase in traffic and the sales goes up than that is still good. Furthermore, they believe that it might get a bigger effect if they focused more on the local market and used for example guerrilla marketing.

They believe that every company needs to be visible on Google, and to have a good website that is adapted to both cellphones and computers. It is important to have a good ranking on Google, to be in the top 5, as those are the only listings that people check. Furthermore, a lot of people make it easy for themselves, if they are looking for a personal trainer then they only Google it and fins one.

It is hard to measure how many customers buy their service based on Google, considering that they do not buy anything online.

He has only been at the company for two months, so it is hard to say if the SEM has resulted in more customers. However, based on the previous companies he has worked in, he believes that the SEM will help to obtain the goals as it has done so in the other companies.

**Company 7, law firm located in Växjö with 9 employees:**
They use both paid advertisements and SEO. They outsource SEO to professionals and take care of the paid advertisements themselves, through Google Adwords. The cost is low and they do not spend much time on it.

The SEO has not been a success, as it apparently is hard. The company they have hired wants to redesign their website, however, they do not want to do this. On the most important keywords, the clients cannot find them easily. They are not pleased with the visibility on the search results.

They do not want to invest more in it, as it is not a priority for them. As things are now they will never invest any money into SEM. However, as it did not cost anything and took very little time it was worth testing. Though, if they notice that people start to turn to Google for their kind of service, they will of course invest more money on it.

The goal is that new potential clients find their website. They want to build new business relations. The goals in themselves are very important. However, they do not think that SEM will help to obtain these goals.

It is not important to be visible on Google as a business lawyer, as good clients will not turn to Google to find them. Most of their customers come from recommendation. The reason why SEM do not work for them is that the clients need to trust them, which they will not do based on a Google search.

He has working in the business for 12-14 years, and has only gotten 3-4 clients through Google.

**Company 8, gym located in Uppsala with less than 10 employees:**
They use both SEO and paid advertisements, through Google Adwords. He takes care of everything himself. Considers the cost to be good as you get a lot from the money you spend on it. He spends a lot of money on it, with analyzing, planning, keyword auctions, keep track of the result, see how the visitors act on their website, and keep track on what keywords attract most customers. He works on it every day.

Considering both the cost and time they spend on it, it works well as you get a lot from it. It works better than other types of marketing techniques. Furthermore, the methods work very well to increase the visibility in the search result.

They feel like SEO and paid advertisements both fill a function. SEO is better to get more visitors to your website. However, if you want to do a campaign than paid advertisements work better. In other words, to just create visibility than SEO is better. Though to get the best effect you should use both of them.

They are not entirely please with their ranking in the search result, as their ranking varies from time to time. It would be better if they hired a company to take care of it for them. However, as he has worked with this before he feels that he wants to take care of it. Though if the company becomes really big in a short period of time, he would consider investing in outsourcing it to a company, this is not likely to happen.

The goal is to get more customers and a higher turnover. To get more customers, it essential for the company to survive, and make money.

It is important to be visible in the search result, because if you are not visible on Google than you do not exist. Furthermore, the higher ranking you have the more traffic you get to your website. Google is the best platform to be visible on, as it is to Google people turn to when they are looking for something.
Moreover, their visibility has helped them to obtain more customers, in other words it has helped them to obtain their goal. They have measured the result and can see how many of the clicks eventually turn into customers.

**Company 9, a self-employed skin therapist located in Gothenburg:**
She uses both paid advertisements and SEO. She works with SEO by updating the content on her website, as well as the keywords. Her husband takes care of everything for her, so the SEO is free, and the paid advertisements costs. However, they are good at keeping the costs low, it costs around 2000SEK per month. Her husband spends quite a lot of time on it, as a hobby.

She has kept statistics a year, to keep track of what happens. Considering what she gets from the costs and time she spends on it, she considers it very good. There is no more affordable marketing technique, as SEM gives a lot more back in relation to the amount of resources she puts on it, both time spent and money. If she had not had help with the SEM, it would have taken her a lot of time, and she would probably have had to hire someone.

She is very pleased with the ranking she has, and considers the methods she uses to be a success. However, she would like to be on top of the search results, though as that costs more money she is not certain if it would be worth it. So she would like to invest more if she can afford it. She believes that she is so successful because there is not much competition in the sector she works in when it comes to rankings in the search results. Especially as it is so hard to become good at it, she does not think she would have been as successful if she had not had her husband, who is very good, to help her.

She believes that she needs both SEO and paid advertisements to reach the best ranking in both advertisements and organic search results. However, she would like to be more visible in the organic search results as that is free. She would also like to be visible on more types of keywords. The disadvantage to the paid advertisements is that it costs every time (but not more than ones a day per person, she thinks) a person clicks on it, which is why she wants to be more visible in the organic search results.

The goal is the get more customers, new customers, unique visitors. This is especially important as she is self-employed and hires a place in a beauty salon. As the salon is on the second floor potential customers do not see advertisement on street level, this is why it is important to be visible in the search results so the customers knows that she exists.

To be visible through paid advertisements is very good to get new customers, and to be visible in the organic search results is important for her current customers and people that do not remember her address. To be visible on Google is a lot more important than on, for example, Facebook and newspapers. As most people search through Google to find the treatment, so she gets a lot more customers through Google than a newspaper advertisement. She asks her customers how they found her and 80-95% says that they found her through Google. Furthermore, she measures the amount of people that visits her website and the traffic has increased a lot.

**Company 10, gym located in Gothenburg with 9 full-time employees and around 10 extra:**
They use both SEO and paid advertisements. They have outsourced the SEO but take care of the paid advertisements themselves. Considers the costs to be low considering the alternatives and they do not spend much time on it themselves.

They have noticed that they do get a lot of traffic through Google, so they consider that the money was well placed. The methods they use have work very well, as they are on top of the search results.
They are either on top, or at the very least among the 3-4 first listings. Earlier they used to be very low in the listings but then they redesigned the website, so now they have worked themselves up in the ranking. Nowadays they continuously try to think how they can keep or improve their position in the search result. They are in other words motivated to invest more into it.

The goal is to get more customers; this is essential, as they need between 400-500 customers per day in order to stay afloat. In order to obtain the goal Google is very important, as more and more customers come to them through Google. If you are not on Google than you do not exist. It is preferable to be on top, but at the very least to be on the first page. The customers start going through the list from the top and if you are not there then no one will contact you.

Google is especially important to reach younger customers, as they use it more. Today you can access Google everywhere through cellphones and tablets. If a customer wants to go to them then it needs to be obvious where they should turn, hence being visible is important. They have noticed that more customers have visited their website, by keeping track of the statistics, and as some tells them they found them through Google.